

THE
MOURTRAY
FAMILY.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



VOL. III.



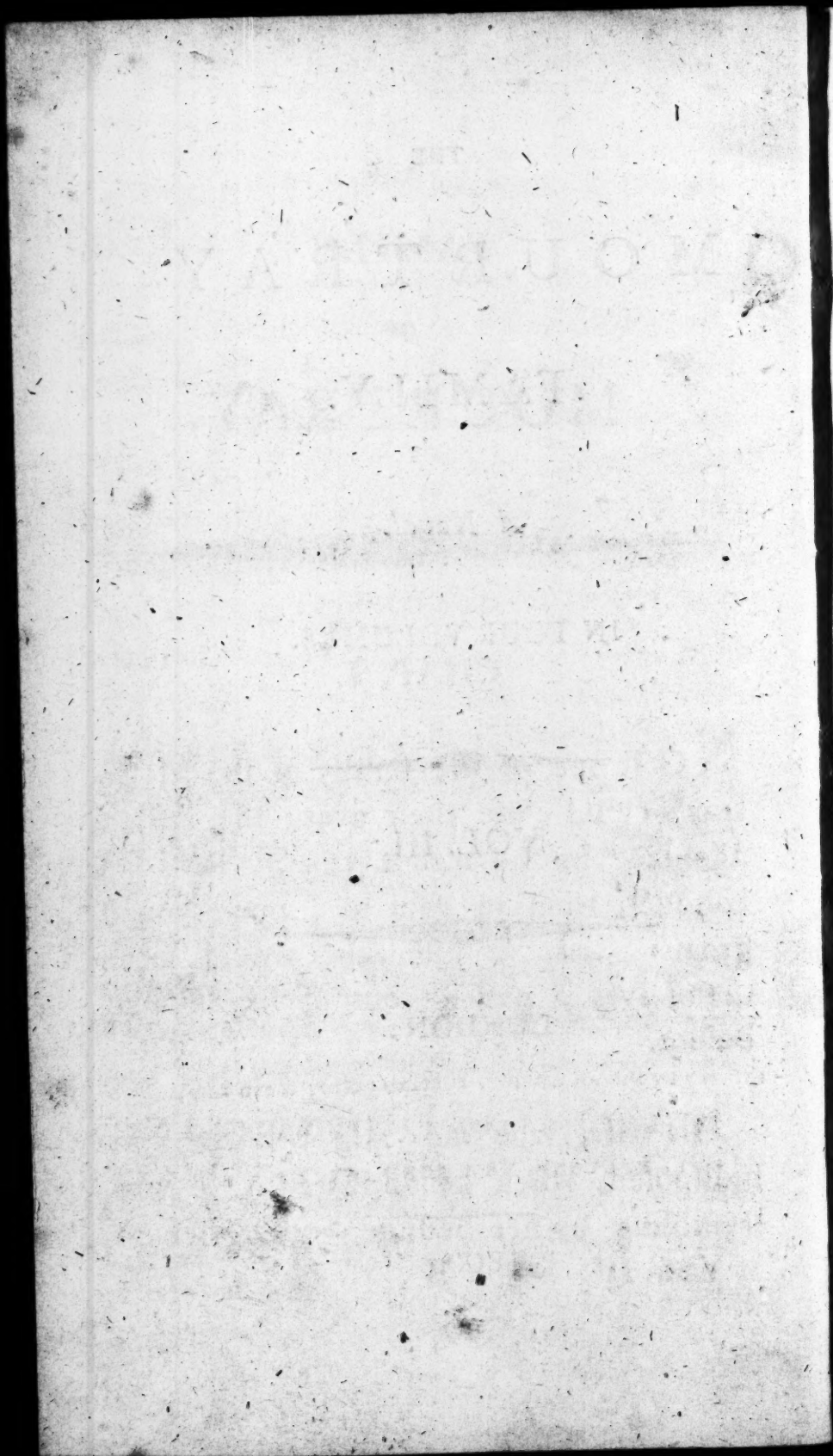
LONDON:

PRINTED BY MILLAR RITCHIE, MIDDLE STREET, CLOTH FAIR,

FOR

R. FAULDER, NEW BOND STREET.

1800.



THE
FAMILY
OF
MOURTRAY.

CHAP. I.

NOT one of the family of the Mourtray's could close their eyes; the father, agonized by the certainty of his son's sad conduct, tried in vain to suppress deep groans, that, at intervals, would force themselves a passage out of his afflicted bosom.

His wife, who had really believed him indisposed, when he appeared pale and trembling by her bedside urging her to

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rise,

rise, was no sooner returned to her bed, than she worried herself, now, about his indisposition ; and now about the unfortunate situation of her son ; remaining yet in entire ignorance as to its cause.

Emma, equally ignorant, suffered still more acutely ; because, independant of the uneasiness she felt for her brother, she tenderly deplored the distress of her parents.

As soon as people began to stir in the streets, Mourtray suddenly started up, and, wrapping himself up in his great coat (having never taken off his clothes), he took his hat, and then, without returning any answer to Mrs. Mourtray's enquiry whither he was going in such haste, he darted out of the house.

After waiting some time, and finding he did not return, Mrs. Mourtray and Emma sat down to a comfortless breakfast,

fast ; when, in despite of the orders given to the servants to let in no creature, Chowles bounced into the room.

“ Servant ladies, servant,” said he : “ why, this is a sad piece of business, truly ! What have you done with the lad ? ”

“ If you mean Henry,” answered Mrs. Mourtray, “ he is absent.”

“ 'Tis well ; he had best keep out of the way, I can tell you ; for, by what I hear, upon my soul, I believe Manders will die.”

Mrs. Mourtray and her daughter, ready to faint with terror at the suspicions he had so incautiously raised, eagerly enquired, both at once, what he meant.

Chowles, a little disconcerted, perceiving the mischief he had done, made no answer.

“ For the love of God, Mr. Chowles,” cried Mrs. Mourtray, gasping for breath, “ do not thus torture me : explain your meaning ; what has Henry done to this Manders ? ”

“ Unfortunately, fought with him, Ma’am ; and (as they say) wounded him mortally.”

“ Oh, God ! ” exclaimed Emma, sinking, pale as death, back in her chair.

“ But is he wounded himself ? O, quickly tell me that ? ” asked Mrs. Mourtray.

“ Not that I know of ; for he ran away directly after the event.”

“ God

"God be praised he did!" cried she, who, totally regardless of all but her son's safety, was almost insensible to his having probably destroyed the life of a fellow-creature.

"It would be shocking, too," said she, after a moment's recollection, "if this Manders were to die!—Poor man!—But as it was a duel, I hope it is not possible that my son could be tried for murder?"

"Most assuredly he would," said the unfeeling Chowles; "and I would not be in his skin for a good deal."

Mrs. Mourtray, with violent exclamations of affright, conjured him to go that instant, and learn the real state of Manders; but Chowles protested the heat was so excessive, that he must have time to rest a little before he could possibly move.

Forced, much against her will, to be patient, she now enquired what had been the cause of this duel; saying, that she had never heard Henry mention the name of Manders in her life.

But Chowles was prevented from giving an immediate reply by the entrance of Mourtray, who, without noticing his visitor, sunk speechless into a chair; and when his wife began telling him the dreadful news, he stopped her short, lifting up his hands, and saying, "I know all."

Chowles then renewing his conversation with Mrs. Mourtray, told her, that though he could not positively affirm it to be the cause, yet it was strongly rumoured that the quarrel originated in a gaming debt.

"A gaming debt!" repeated Mourtray, shrugging his shoulders, and raising his
his

his clasped hands to his forehead, with a look of deep anguish.

“Impossible ! absolutely impossible !” cried Mrs. Mourtray vehemently : “ Henry certainly does not game ; no, no ; I am sure there is not a word of truth in this report.”

“ Nay, I don’t aver the report to be truth,” said Chowles ; “ though I must own to you, Ma’am, I think it very probable ; for my young friend Henry (as my cousin Prouting tells me) is fond of shaking his elbows.”

“ Never mind a word she says,” cried Mrs. Mourtray angrily, “ for she has what the French call *une mauvaise langue* ; but if even the poor boy was formerly a little imprudent in this way, I’ll answer for his having lived very regularly of late ; he has been constantly at home by twelve

B 4

o’clock,

o'clock, excepting the night before last, when he staid out, at a ball, till morning."

" Ah ! I wish he had only staid at a ball !" said Mourtray : " however, till now, I never heard of this."

" What signifies ?" said she, colouring.

" I fear it signifies very much," replied her husband ; " for I greatly suspect his ruin may be dated from that fatal night."

" Lord ! how you terrify me ! I must own he did not come home till near eight in the morning ; and now I remember, when I saw him at breakfast, I thought he looked pale and discomposed ; at first, too, he was very absent, but he soon recovered, and afterwards appeared in violent spirits."

" Which

"Which were feigned, no doubt," said Mourtray, "to disguise the real state of his mind.—Why did not you tell me all this before?"

"Because I thought it a matter of no consequence; and that you might blame him for keeping such late hours."

Chowles now offered to go and enquire after Captain Manders; but Mourtray said he need not give himself that trouble, as he had already gained all the information that could be known at present; which was, that though he yet lived, he was in the greatest danger.

The former, however, persisted in saying he would go in the course of a few hours, and return early in the evening, when he hoped, he said, to bring Mrs. Mourtray better news.

Though poor Mourtray would gladly have dispensed with his company, he would not oppose an arrangement, from which his wife promised to herself some degree of comfort.

Just after the cloth was removed from a table, where the family had scarcely touched any breakfast, a letter, sent from Richmond, was brought to Mourtray: with a trembling hand, and presaging its contents, he opened it, and read what follows:

“ Richmond, June 26, 179—

“ Dear Sir,

“ It is with the utmost reluctance that I trouble you at this moment, feeling infinite concern for your situation; but, in matters of importance, it is necessary to be explicit, without loss of time.

“ Doubtless

“ Doubtless you are already informed of your son’s rash act, the terrible consequences that are expected from it, as, likewise, of his breach of promise; you cannot, therefore, expect otherwise, than that I should instantly declare our treaty (thus violated by Mr. Henry Mourtray) to be null and void; and, I must add, that the very cogent reasons for its dissolution, preclude all possibility of its ever being renewed.

“ Had the young man proved himself worthy of my daughter, as I once, too hastily, believed he would, I should have esteemed myself happy to have been so nearly connected with such estimable persons, as yourself and Lady.

“ I trust, however, by your paternal admonitions, that Mr. Henry Mourtray, who, as yet, has scarcely attained manhood, may be brought to see and repent of his errors, before it be too late; and

I would not, in your place, be sparing of a little wholesome correction, that you may the sooner work his reformation.

“ I sincerely pray for this event, not only for his sake, but also for your's, and that worthy Lady, his mother's, to whom I beg to offer my best respects.

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

JAMES SILBOURNE.”

Emma alone was in the room when her father read this letter : he could not speak as he handed it to her ; but the contents, grievous as they were, did not, in the least, surprize either of them.

Desirous, however, of sparing Mrs. Mourtray any additional pain, after all
she

she had already endured, they agreed that this fresh affliction should be concealed for the present.

“Rash, unhappy boy!” cried Mourtray, a tear trembling in his eye; “how completely has he ruined himself!—What!—before three weeks had elapsed since the solemn engagement he took, you see, Emma, he breaks out in defiance of it, and rushes headlong into those very vices which he had been warned would be his destruction!—It is very plain his duel with Captain Manders was in consequence either of some tavern broil, or gambling dispute, which happened on that fatal night he staid from home!—His countenance, it seems, in the morning denoted something to be wrong!—Alas! I did not see him then, nor did I, unfortunately, perceive his agitation when he received the letter yesterday: if I had, perhaps I might, at least, have prevented

prevented a part of this mischief; but now"

His emotion now choaked his words, whilst Emma, bathed in tears, with sympathetic feelings, tenderly pressed his hand to her lips.

"My dear, dear father!" cried she, "let us hope that all will yet be well!—Manders will recover; and, perhaps, in time Mr. Silbourne will be reconciled to poor Henry."

"No, never!—my love, never!—He is a man of a firm and decided character, but very inflexible in all points; and, certainly, when he has every reason to think himself in the right, he will strictly adhere to the resolution he has made: do not, therefore, deceive yourself, or brother, with any hopes that his marriage with Miss Silbourne will ever take place; yet, mortifying as it is to lose all the
bright

bright prospects that so lately opened before him, this is what gives me the least trouble: the sorrow *I* feel is chiefly occasioned by his breach of promise, and the apprehension that he has been guilty of a dreadful crime; but, if it please the Almighty to spare the life of Captain Manders, and that Henry, after smarting so severely for his rash folly and wickedness, should, indeed, reform, then I shall easily make up *my* mind to bear this disappointment, as to his marriage, as he must *his*; and, likewise, to be content with a narrow fortune, which, I fear, will be his lot."

"He will reform: I am sure he will; and become worthy of such a father, as, dear Papa, you have ever been to us both!—What has happened cannot fail of making a deep impression upon him."

"I wish,

“ I wish, my Emma, I could think so ; but, alas ! I doubt it !—for, if he had so little forbearance, with such a prize in view, what trust can I have, that, were the present evils removed, he would not involve himself in fresh embarrassments ? Gaming, too, is, of all vices, that which takes the deepest root in the heart : however, Henry is young ; and, if he could but acquire resolution, it may yet be eradicated.”

Chowles's entrance put an end to this conversation : he gave a very bad account of Captain Manders, of whose wounds the Surgeons entertained a most unfavourable opinion ; nor had they yet been able to extract the ball, which was lodged in his side. The only circumstance that had transpired concerning the duel, was, that it had been fought without seconds.

Intelligence such as this threw a deeper gloom over all the party, to which Mrs. Mourtray had just added her company; but Chowles, who never participated in any uneasy sensations that affected others, soon grew tired of looking sad: therefore, under the pretext of calling off Mrs. Mourtray's and Emma's thoughts from disagreeable subjects, he began a detail of the embellishments he projected for his house at Clapham; and recounted instances of his good fortune, in having picked up, at a low price, amongst the poor emigrants, some choice pieces of china, and other curious articles; which, when properly placed, would have, he said, a very grand effect, and render his villa one of the most superb in the kingdom.

Mourtray, provoked at his insensibility, abruptly left the room: Emma wished to follow his example; but a look from her mother, fixed her to her seat; whilst the
former,

former, in listening to him, partly forgot her sorrows.

Biscuit figures, French clocks, glasses, chintz, and *Damas de trois couleurs*, swam, in succession, before her eyes; and she reflected, that, if she could but see Emma possessed of these treasures, she might again be happy. The object of her solicitude, however, sat absorbed in melancholy; and, so far from paying the least attention to Chowles, she only viewed him with increased disgust.

But, in the midst of Mrs. Mourtray's waking dreams, she was disturbed by a message from her husband, desiring to speak with her immediately.

She found him pacing the room, with a disordered air; and, as soon as he saw her, he asked, with some asperity, if she could prevail upon herself to quit Mr. Chowles's very interesting details,

to

to attend to some he had to give her of her son?

Mrs. Mourtray, whose transitions of temper were very sudden, at the mention of her son, forgot Chowles's catalogue, and instantly burst into tears; when Mourtray, pointing to a letter which lay open on the table, said, in a tone of deep dejection, "*That* Sydney has sent me, by his groom. It fully explains the whole of the late dreadful transactions, and even informs me of what I did not, indeed, expect!"

"O! how you terrify me!" cried Mrs. Mourtray:—"do read the letter to me."

"Excuse me," said he; "that is beyond my power:—I have neither voice, nor eyes, at present."

Mrs.

Mrs. Mourtray then read the letter herself:

Sydney Farm, June 26, 179—

“ My dear Sir,

“ In the first place, let me hasten to assure you, that your son is safely arrived here; and, though still under great perturbation of mind, rather more composed than he was during our journey; and, as his person is quite unknown in this part of the country, you may rest in perfect security about him: I have, besides, had the precaution to introduce him into my humble habitation under the name of Morton; and none here, but my groom, who is the bearer of this, and whom I can trust, have ever seen him before.

“ Need I say how much it grieves me, that I must, in the next place, severely wound your feelings, by giving you that
informa-

information which you have a right to expect; and, though my heart shrinks from the task, yet it is necessary that, without disguise, you should learn the whole of that unfortunate affair, of which you are already, in part (no doubt), by this time, acquainted.

“ Henry, I am persuaded, has been perfectly ingenuous in the account he has confided to me of the circumstances, which I have undertaken to transmit to you.

“ It seems that, on Monday night last, after attending the Silbournes to the play, and seeing them to their carriage, he met, at the door of the Theatre, Captain Manders, of the _____ Regiment of Guards, who offered to set him down at home, which offer he accepted; but, on the way, Manders, after some jokes on the domestic style of life he had lately adopted, persuaded him to go and sup
with

with him at a tavern : there, he owns, he drank very freely ; and, being heated with wine, unfortunately he forgot his promise, and was prevailed upon to engage in play.

“ Fortune, at first, favoured him surprisingly, and he won a large sum ; but, as he was on the point of departure, all the company being gone but Manders and another officer, he consented, flushed as he was with his late success, to engage with them anew ; when, in the space of about two hours, he not only lost all he had won, but four thousand pounds more than he had any means of paying.”

“ Gracious God !” exclaimed Mrs. Mourtray :—“ Henry to act thus !—No ! I could not have believed it possible !”

Her husband spoke not ; and, after a short pause, she proceeded reading.

“ This

“ This unlucky stroke entirely dissipated the fumes of wine: indignant against himself, alarmed at the consequences, and vexed to the very soul, he saw no other chance of averting the impending danger, than that of trusting to the honour of these officers; he, therefore, gave them a candid account of his situation relative to the Silbournes, solemnly assuring Manders, that, immediately after his marriage, his first care should be to pay the large sum which he had lost to him alone, and for which he offered him a bond; and then he exacted from them both an oath, never to divulge the transactions of that night.

“ Both the officers readily consented to do all he required; and the behaviour of Manders, on this occasion, was so gentleman-like, that Henry departed thoroughly satisfied of his honour; and so much relieved from his late tumultuous
 sensa-

sensations, that he became tolerably calm : he could not, however, quiet some qualms of conscience, arising from his breach of promise ; but he had little apprehensions of its being ever known, for he perfectly relied on the officers' word, especially on that of Manders ; and had he been less secure in regard to the other person, he knew he was going out of the way, being under orders to embark for Flanders early in the day.—The other persons with whom he had played, had long left the tavern, and were all strangers to him, as likewise he was to them.

“ On Tuesday morning he waited upon Silbourne, and was, as usual, cordially received by him and his daughter ; but having a violent head-ache, he declined attending them, as they requested, to Kensington-gardens ; and, returning home, he sought to gain an hour's sleep, to enable him to appear before you at dinner, so
that

that his looks might not betray his late agitation, which at breakfast, he feared, he had ill concealed from Mrs. Mourtray.

“ Figure to yourself, therefore, my dear Sir, after all these precautions, what Henry’s feelings must have been, when, in *your* presence, he received the inclosed letter.

“ TO HENRY MOURTRAY, ESQ.

“ Sir,

“ By an extraordinary chance, after you left me this morning, I learned from authority, which, I am grieved to say, can scarcely be doubted, that last night you violated the solemn promise you had given me so very lately, having lost, at one sitting, no less than four thousand pounds!

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“ Whatever

“ Whatever reason I have to credit this disagreeable information, if you can, upon the word and honour of a gentleman, deny it to be a fact, I will believe my ears deceived me, and then I shall hardly think any apology sufficient, for having troubled you with this detestable calumny.

“ I am going instantly with my family to Richmond, where I hope, in the course of the evening, to receive a line from you, unequivocally to contradict it.—But should I not hear from you before tomorrow morning, I certainly shall consider the report to be founded on truth, and consequently, without making any comments on your conduct, shall declare our engagement to be null and void.

“ In that case, I must, in my daughter's name, as well as my own, decline the continuance of your acquaintance ; and as you are not ignorant that whatever
resolutions

resolutions I form are irrevocable, I am persuaded you will spare yourself, and me, the trouble of any useless applications.

“ I do assure you, I shall be truly happy, if you can demonstrate your innocence to him, who has the honour to be,

“ Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ JAMES SILBOURNE.”

London, Tuesday.

“ What a cruel letter!” cried Mrs. Mourtray : “ no wonder poor Henry was so affected by it !”

“ Ah ! he had but too much cause to be affected, because he was conscious of what he had done,” said Mourtray ; “ but

Silbourne's conduct, so far from being cruel, appears to me full of candour."

Mrs. Mourtray again resumed Sydney's narrative.

"Henry, who was in a manner stunned with the perusal of this fatal letter, had no sooner, in some degree, recovered from the first shock, than he rushed out of your house, without any project what to do—mechanically, however, he turned his steps towards Silbourne's house, where he learned the family had been gone thence above an hour, but had left a servant in town, with orders to bring immediately to Richmond any letter that Mr. Henry Mourtray might send.

"Poor Henry had none to send! He dared not deny the truth of the report which had reached Silbourne's ears; but how that had happened, and so speedily, too,

too, was a matter he determined to investigate directly.

“ The officers he thought must have been the persons who had thus treacherously betrayed him, and, boiling with rage, he sallied forth, resolved to make them pay dearly for their perfidy ; but recollecting that one was gone, and that only Manders remained, he hastened in search of him.

“ Henry did not find Manders for some time, but at last traced, and stopped him, just as he was stepping into a hackney coach, in Cockspur Street.—Henry rudely pulled him back, and with such terms as fury dictated, haughtily taxing him with the basest treachery, insisted upon instant satisfaction.

“ By his own account, I fear he behaved, at this juncture, with a degree of violence little short of madness : nor can

he recollect many particulars of what passed, excepting that they both got into the coach, when Manders, with much temper, positively denied the charge against him, swearing that he did not even know Silbourne by sight; and that the person concerned in play with them, had been with him, from the time they had all three separated in the morning, till he left town, two hours since.

“ The condescension of Manders, in giving him this explanation, unfortunately had no effect on Henry, who refused giving the least credit to it; and obstinately insisted upon deciding the dispute instantly with pistols: the other, who was now become equally angry himself, consented.

“ The coachman was now ordered to drive to St. George's Fields, where, without any seconds, they proposed to adjust the matter with the pistols with which
Henry

Henry had provided himself.—The fatal business was soon terminated, for Manders received a shot in his side, and fell bathed in blood. This sight brought Henry a little to himself; he attempted to bind up the wound, but his trembling hands refused the office; away, therefore, he flew to fetch a surgeon, whom, as well as the hackney coachman (who was waiting at a little distance), he directed to the place where Manders lay.

“Then making the best of his way back into the town, with his brain, he said, burning as if it were on fire, he walked on with a quick disordered step, and had reached Charing Cross, when fortunately I met him.”

CHAP. II.

MRS. MOURTRAY now was forced to discontinue reading: the horror of Henry's rash action, as likewise the idea of the danger to which he himself had been exposed, overpowered her; and it was not till after she had drunk a glass of water that she was able to attend to Sydney's letter of which, her husband offered to read to her the conclusion.

“ —Glad to find the object of my search, I caught hold of his arm, convinced, by the wildness of his air, that something extraordinary had befallen him; but, offended with me, he tried to disengage himself from my hold, sternly demanding, why I attempted to detain him?

“ This

"This was not a time for me to be captious, so I mildly told him the uneasiness his absence had given to his family, and entreated he would suffer me to accompany him home."

"Home!" cried he; "home!—I shall have no home soon: I am a murderer!"

"Excessively shocked at this language, though I only imputed it to a temporary delirium, I tried first to sooth, then to expostulate with him, but observed he did not attend to me; at last I hinted something about Miss Silbourne: at the sound of her name he started, and, clasping his hands together, exclaimed, in agony, "Selina! ah, dearest Selina!—lost to me for ever!"

"Though he turned away his face, I saw he shed tears; this gave me comfort: and then I pressed him so earnestly to relieve his oppressed heart, by confiding

its sorrows to me, that, in a few broken sentences, he revealed the whole.

“Extremely alarmed, I saw there was not a moment to lose to save him from the danger which threatened him, and that had not yet occurred to him: I therefore, insensibly, led him towards my lodgings, which I prevailed upon him to enter with me, where I secretly gave orders for a chaise and four to be got ready directly; being now resolved that he should not go home, as I had no doubt a strict search would be made after him, and the best method of securing his safety seemed to be, to carry him directly out of town.

“But suddenly a fresh difficulty was started, after he had agreed to my plan; for Henry, who has really an excellent heart, refused peremptorily to stir till he heard what had become of Manders. I durst not venture to send any body on such

such an enquiry, and I was afraid of leaving your son alone, who seemed, I must own, ripe for any deed of desperation.

“ At length, as opposition only irritated him, upon his pledging his word he would not move till my return, I went, privately, to gain in the neighbourhood where Manders, senior, lived, what intelligence I could.

“ After waiting some time, I learned all I wanted to know; for I spoke with a surgeon of my acquaintance, coming out of the house, who told me the wounded man had just been conveyed home, where he was in such a state, that little hopes were entertained of his life, and that he had left two of his profession with him.

“ This sad intelligence (which, however, I softened, in some measure, to

Henry) hastened my operations, and, after writing you a line, we set out instantly, and, travelling with the utmost expedition, reached this place in about eleven hours.

“ My poor friend was extremely low all the way; he is now, by my persuasion, gone to bed.—I have written this in the greatest haste imaginable, to lessen, in some degree, your anxiety: what I have further to communicate, I shall send by the post some hours hence.

“ Adieu! my dear Sir.

“ JULIAN SYDNEY.”

Mourtray having finished reading, a short and melancholy conversation ensued between him and his wife; after which he went in quest of his daughter.

He found Chowles alone in the drawing-room, biting his nails: at sight of
Mourtray

Mourtray he arose, and, sullenly bidding him good night, departed.

It seems he had, most injudiciously, seized the opportunity her parents absence afforded him, of pleading to Emma in favour of sentiments always detestable to her from such lips, but which, at such a moment, she felt as an absolute outrage to all delicacy.

Hence she had, without disguising her disgust, abruptly left him.—Being now informed of his departure, she hastened to her father, who communicated to her Sydney's narrative. The sensations it excited in her breast may be more easily conceived than described; but she had sufficient fortitude to suppress much of what she felt, and gently to sooth the sorrows of both her parents; for Mrs. Mourtray now joined her family.

The

The following morning Mourtray received the promised letter from Sydney. As usual, he first read the contents to himself; and Emma, who watched his countenance, saw, with infinite concern, that, whilst he was reading, he changed colour several times. When he had done, he gave her the letter, and bade her read it aloud to her mother: "I shall, in the mean while," said he, "retire to my own room."

His look, as he spake, was so very gloomy, that Emma had scarcely courage to begin reading, till Mrs. Mourtray, impatient, insisted upon it.

Sydney Farm, June 27, 179—

"My dear Sir,

"Henry, probably exhausted by sorrow and fatigue, is still in bed; but his sleep is too much disturbed, to be (I fear) refreshing;—and now, I proceed to fulfil my promise.

"I own,

" I own I could have wished to defer, till your spirits had somewhat recovered from their recent shock, mentioning some circumstances relative to my poor friend : for it is grievous to me to afflict those, whose happiness is so dear to me, as is your's, and that of all belonging to you.

" But Henry is of opinion, that it is much better you should, at once, know the worst, and that his mind will be greatly relieved by a full confession to the kindest and most indulgent of fathers ; whose anger, though just, may be deprecated by it.

" I am, therefore, to tell you, that Henry had, prior to the fatal gaming transaction, secretly taken measures, with Lord Wilmington's consent, to sell his commission, to discharge some troublesome debts which he did not wish should appear against him ; and he knew that Silbourne would

would rather be glad, than sorry, that he left the army.

“ At the time he formed this scheme, he had not considered the reflections it would draw upon his character, to leave his profession in the midst of a war.—He now severely repents having concluded the sale of his commission, two days before he left town; and the more so, as it will only discharge a small part of what he owes: for, besides his debt of honour to Manders, he owes near three thousand pounds.”

“ The boy’s brain is turned !” exclaimed Mrs. Mourtray, interrupting Emma; “ he is raving mad, I am sure !—and I don’t believe a word of this.—But go on.”

“ —Let not this, my dear Sir, affect you too deeply. Pecuniary concerns, possibly, may be arranged, and certainly are
are

are trifles compared to our other sorrows. Never, till now, did I seriously repine at my scanty income, when it would be exquisite joy to step forward, on this occasion, to my friend's assistance. However, I am not wholly without hope of being yet of some use, by means of the worthy Newton, who is quite a father to me.

“ Excuse the liberty I take:—I only hinted this, in case Henry's debts, coming thus suddenly upon you, might be any inconvenience. I am sure you will have the goodness to send him a line, with an assurance of your pardon, which he is most anxious to receive. He has frequently mentioned, with deep concern, the pain which he is sensible he has inflicted upon his parents and sister.

“ I have, privately, taken measures to receive constant accounts of the state of Manders; and now, my dear Sir, I have
only

only to add, that I shall be extremely desirous to hear, that neither your health, nor that of Mrs. and Miss Mourtray, have suffered during this severe trial. I am, indeed, the less uneasy on your account, as I well know that your mind is strengthened by a superior share of piety and fortitude.

“ I am,
 “ With the sincerest esteem and respect,
 “ My dear Sir,
 “ Your very faithful and obedient servant,
 “ JULIAN SYDNEY.”

Mourtray, who came into the room as Emma finished reading the last lines of the letter, was, now, eagerly asked by his wife, whether he really believed his son could have been guilty of such excessive extravagance as Sydney represented?—Mourtray stared at her with astonishment; angrily enquiring, whether she supposed the account given by that most excellent

cellent young man to have been his own invention?

Mrs. Mourtray looked a little ashamed; but said, she had wished to persuade herself, that Henry, in the present perturbed state of his mind, spoke at random, without knowing what he said.

Mourtray shook his head, assuring her, that he gave but too much credit to his confession.

"Well!" cried Mrs. Mourtray, "who could have thought that Henry had been so extravagant!--Yet, there is one comfort left; for, however large his debts may be, the legacy, my dear, fortunately, will enable you to pay them: though it is excessively provoking to have any part of this money thus applied."

"I am sorry to say, my dear," said he, "that you are greatly mistaken concerning the
the

the state of my affairs: it is true, I can, and certainly will, pay Henry's debts; but, when I have done this, little, I assure you, of the legacy will remain, so much of it being already expended."

"You can't be serious: I know it is impossible."

"Indeed, my dear," said Mourtray, with a sigh, "you will find it but too true. The scheme in which Chowles persuaded me to venture ten thousand pounds with him is likely to prove a very bad undertaking; for I have lately learned (though he has been very silent on the subject), that he has as little hopes as myself, that we shall ever recover one six-pence of our money, either in interest or principal."

"This is certainly a cruel stroke," said she; "but, however, after allowing for our late extraordinary expenses, still

still nearly twenty thousand pounds remain."

"No such thing:—Downton has cost me a great deal already; and, when the works are completed, I question whether I shall have spent, there, less than three thousand pounds: add to this, five thousand pounds settled on you and Emma, which I hold to be sacred; various sums, paid for Henry; with the expenses occasioned by the increase of our little establishment since we came to town;—not to mention the money I have been forced to advance to defray the heavy charges of the law suit carrying on in Antigua: cast up these sums together, and you will find how very small a part of the legacy can remain."

"I am petrified!" cried Mrs. Mourtray: "all our hopes, now, must rest on your recovering the estate abroad, and on Henry's marriage; for, I flatter myself,
Silbourne

Silbourne will, in time, be pacified, notwithstanding what he wrote to my son."

"Alas! that is quite out of the question!—Silbourne has formally announced to me, that the compact is at an end between him and Henry: this disagreeable circumstance I have hitherto concealed from you; but now you must know the truth, that you may not buoy yourself up with false hopes. In regard to the estate, I am not very sanguine in my expectations of ever being in possession of it; but as to ourselves, we must return to Downton, and live quietly and frugally there, as formerly:—would to God we had never quitted it!—and, as to Henry (if he can stay in England, which I greatly apprehend will not be the case), he must engage in some profession to find himself bread."

Mrs. Mourtray, afflicted before, was now so overwhelmed with the weight of these

these accumulated calamities, especially *that* of returning to obscurity, and to Downton, that she could only relieve herself by shedding a torrent of tears; and her husband, who thought it best to suffer her thus to vent her sorrows, that they might subside the sooner, did not attempt to impede their course; but retired to write to Sydney, and his son.

The very amiable conduct of the former he viewed with the greater admiration, because he had frequently observed, with displeasure, the slighting manner with which Henry generally treated him; presuming to sneer at what he called his pedantry and premature wisdom.

Sydney, he knew, had too much penetration not to have remarked somewhat of his offensive behaviour, though he had the greatness of mind to despise it; and was far too noble to recollect it,
when

when Henry stood in need of his assistance.

While Mourtray was writing his letters, the task of consoling her mother devolved upon Emma, which was the more difficult, as the reasoning powers of Mrs. Mourtray, were far less strong than were her passions.

That she should be forced to lay the chief part of her tribulations to the score of her darling, Henry, irritated as much as it vexed her: at the same time it appeared to her quite incomprehensible, how he could involve both himself and family in such difficulties: all compassion for his share in these was lost in anger, as well as in disappointment, at the cruel certainty (for her husband asserted it to be such) that Henry had entirely forfeited Mr. Silbourne's favour, and thereby lost all chance of the brilliant fortune that once seemed within his grasp: the legacy, too,

too, which had been the cause of so much exultation, and on the strength of which she had formed so many agreeable plans, had, by concurring misfortunes, dwindled away; and now nothing was left but a precarious claim to an estate, God knows where!—All these were mortifications she could ill digest.

But none pressed so hardly upon her as the necessity of returning to the solitude of Downton, with Emma yet unmarried; and she could not dwell on a single idea that offered consolation, unless it was that of Chowles's attachment. If, indeed, she could but effectuate a match between him and Emma, all yet (she thought) might be well; but here she had to contend with her daughter's aversion, and her husband's indifference; two such important obstacles, that she was at a loss to devise how she should overcome them.

Emma's cogitations, resulting from the same cause, were very different: while her gentle nature made her tenderly lament her brother's unhappy situation, she could neither justify his conduct, nor refrain from shuddering at the excessive violence of his passions; but never having formed very sanguine notions of his steadiness, her disappointment was the less acute. Softened, herself, by love, she imagined his loss of Miss Silbourne a much heavier calamity than that of her fortune: indeed, she considered the diminution of the legacy, though certainly an evil, yet as one that might be endured with great resignation. Her concern, nevertheless, for her parents sufferings was extreme.

As for the banishment to Downton, she regretted it; not because it would sequester her from the gay world, of which she had already seen enough, to lose, in great measure, a keen relish for its delights,

delights, always superior in fancy to what they prove in actual enjoyment; but the real mischief of this banishment was, that it would remove her far away from Lord Miramont, just at the time when she thought she had some chance of improving the partiality she had long suspected he felt for her.

However, as the misfortunes she deplored were remediless, and had not originated from any fault of her's, she determined, with her usual good sense, not to suffer her spirits to be subdued by them; but, rather, to exert herself to be of some use and comfort to her parents.

CHAP. III.

MRS. MOURTRAY, with a disposition highly inflammable, always felt violently at first; but, except in regard to deep-rooted prejudices; joy and sorrow, hope and fear, as well as every other passion, only transiently glided over her mind, never sinking beneath the surface.

Thus, after the first paroxysms of her grief had subsided, her anger against Henry ceased: her fears of the consequences of the duel naturally grew fainter, as she daily heard less alarming accounts of Manders; and her vexation at the rapid decrease of the legacy gave way to fresh hopes, artfully instilled into her by Chowles, of vast riches which still awaited her, when once the law-suit should be terminated.

Should

Should this flattering vision be realized, she had no doubt that Silbourne's anger might be appeased, and his former intentions resumed in Henry's favour; and, what was full as material for her happiness, she should then no longer be obliged to bury herself and Emma at Downton.

Poor Mourtray, whose character was very different, appeared sometimes insensible, yet felt but too much for his own repose: slowly his mind received impressions; but, when once they fixed on it, they sunk deeply and indelibly.

Hence, though he most cordially forgave his son, as he was enjoined to do by his religion and tender paternal feelings, yet he could neither erase from his memory the disgrace he had brought upon himself, nor the numerous causes he had given him of dissatisfaction.

Emma's behaviour, during this period of affliction, endeared her more than ever to her father: unaccustomed as he was to discharge his sorrows into the breast of another, he would, at times, break through his reserve, and seriously discourse with her on his affairs; for though her inexperience and ignorance of business precluded the possibility of his receiving assistance from her, the tender sensibility of her disposition assured him of consolation: to be listened to with sympathizing interest by a reasonable being, is, indeed, one of the greatest reliefs to a dejected mind.

During ten days, passed by the Mourtrays in all the fluctuations of hope and fear respecting the state of Manders, the whole family remained at home, refusing admittance to all company; for Manders had an alarming relapse after he had been judged out of immediate danger; and, in consequence of the vast loss of
blood

blood he had suffered, the surgeons had not yet ventured to pronounce a decided opinion as to his safety.

Mourtray now spent his whole time in a strict scrutiny of his own and his son's affairs; but on an investigation of the debts of the latter, they were found yet more considerable than he himself had apprehended.

He had not only gamed deeply, but occasionally borrowed small sums, which, though they had escaped his own memory, were accurately remembered by others. Although Mourtray generously forbore to wound Henry by reproaches or complaints, at a time when he knew he was sunk into despondency, he could not entirely conceal from him all the inconveniences which his extravagance had drawn upon his family, as well as himself.

After pointing out to him, in very forcible language, the necessity of adopting a strict system of œconomy, he earnestly recommended to him, to consult with his worthy friend Sydney on his future plan of life; promising his assistance, as far as his ability would permit, in any profession he chose to embrace.

Mourtray's letters to Sydney breathed the warmest expressions of gratitude for his kindness to his son; but, had his young friend been himself in a situation to assist him in pecuniary concerns, he would not have availed himself of his generosity; of course, therefore, under the present circumstances, he declined his offer.

Henry's letters to his father seemed written in the true spirit of contrition: he appeared to be sensible of his goodness; made admirable resolutions touching his future conduct; dwelt with gratitude

titude on Sydney's friendly behaviour; promising to consult with him, in regard to what line of life he should pursue, and shortly acquaint him with his decision.—His anxiety concerning the life of Manders continued to torment him; though he persisted in believing that through him, by some indiscretion, Silbourne had obtained the information which had blasted all his hopes of happiness.

Matters were in this state, when, one morning, as Mrs. and Miss Mourtray were sitting at breakfast, a clamorous noise was heard in the hall; and Peter, bursting into the parlour, declared, that the old Frenchwoman who lived at Lady Wilmington's was below, and would not go away without seeing Miss Mourtray.

She was, therefore, allowed to appear.—Her eyes were violently swelled, and

she was under such extreme agitation, that she could not at first speak, so as to be understood : all that could be gathered from her was, that the greatest of all *malheurs* had just happened.

Mrs. Mourtray had no conception that the greatest of all *malheurs* could relate to any other person than her son ; therefore, instantly, she concluded Manders was dead, and that Henry was carried to prison ; nor did it occur to her, how unlikely it was that Madame Duplin should be the bearer of this intelligence.

But, breaking out into vehement exclamations, she declared that she was undone, ruined for ever, and the most wretched of human beings!

The sorrows of Madame Duplin seemed now suspended, while she stared at her with astonishment, not in the least comprehending

prehending the cause of such extraordinary agitation.

Emma, however, being accustomed to read her mother's thoughts, easily developed it; and, having learned what had thus affected the Frenchwoman, at last made Mrs. Mourtray comprehend, as soon as she could obtain her attention,—that the greatest of all *malheurs* was, the elopement of Lady Isabella Fontelieu with Captain Darnford; and this event had so irritated Lord Wilmington, that he had immediately, *sans façons*, turned Madame Duplin out of his house, and actually refused to pay the salary due to her.

“And this is all!—A mighty matter, indeed!” cried Mrs. Mourtray indignantly: “and so, Madame, you come blubbering here, frightening me out of my wits for this foolish business!”

Madame Duplin thought it a very serious one.—Lady Isabella's elopement, she said, was a sad thing ; and it was much to be lamented, that so fine a young lady should fling herself away on a *roué* : “ *mais enfin,*” added she ; “ that is her affair.”

Madame Duplin now recounted her own misfortunes.—To be accused of conniving at Lady Bell's flight ; then disgracefully dismissed from a family she had so long and faithfully served ;—to be sent wandering into the wide world, without knowing whither to turn herself ; were, she said, monstrous wrongs ; and she resolved to have the comfort, at least, of complaining to Miss Mourtray, who knew the injustice of the Earl's accusation.

Now, though Mrs. Mourtray had no dislike at any time to enumerate all her own grievances, she had an insurmountable

able dislike to hear those of others ; and nothing could be less interesting to her than Madame Duplin, her young lady, or, indeed, the whole house of Fontelieu.

She therefore drily observed, that if Lady Bell's marriage with Captain Darnford was considered as such a misfortune, better care ought to have been taken to prevent it.—That, for her part, she thought the Captain would have little cause to be elated by it ; for that his wife, who had no fortune at present, had a disposition to spend millions ;—and that as to Madame herself, she would find people enough willing to take her into their families, because she had the good luck to be born in France,

Madame Duplin bowed ; a smile of self-consequence appeared on her broad face.

But

But Mrs. Mourtray was not in the humour to let her enjoy this supposed compliment; so she added, "if you were, Madame, an industrious English woman, and had every virtue and talent under the sun, you would probably starve; however innocent you might be of any participation in this affair of the elopement; for it would certainly leave a slur upon your character, at least on the score of discretion:—but being, as I before said, a Frenchwoman, who, whether good or bad, must find favour here, *you* are sure of doing well."

Madame Duplin now made a wry face, and retired; hastening to the houses of those of Lady Wilmington's acquaintance, whose curiosity she knew was on the stretch to learn all the particulars of Lady Bell's flight: of this, however, she could only give a very imperfect account.

The preceding night, Lady Bell, it seems, declined attending her mother to an assembly, and, pleading indisposition, went early to bed. Madame Duplin, who slept in a closet within her chamber, declared she never heard her stir; which was easily credited, as she was a fat, gross woman, likely to sleep sound, and moreover very deaf.

But she imagined, that as soon as the house was quiet, her young lady softly arose, and contrived to creep down stairs unheard.—The porter was strongly suspected of having opened the hall door, as it was judged impossible for her to have managed unbolting and unchaining it herself; and, as he lay close to the hall, he must have heard this operation, if he did not himself perform it. Of course, though, as well as Madame Duplin, he protested his innocence, he was also discharged.

The

The watchman, finding the door ajar about four o'clock in the morning, alarmed the family.—Lord Wilmington was the first to suspect what had happened, and with great haste repaired himself to Lady Bell's chamber, which he found empty, and her governess snoring in bed, unconscious of her absence.

Servants were now dispatched different ways in search of the fugitive. Lord Wilmington, half frantic with rage, walked to Darnford's lodgings, which he found shut up, apparently uninhabited.—All the intelligence that was gained in the course of the servants enquiries, was, that a chaise and four had been seen driving at a furious rate, near Grosvenor Square, about two o'clock; and so much time having since elapsed, Lord Wilmington almost despaired that those he sent on the North road after his daughter would be able to overtake her: and he was in the right, for they never did.

Lady

Lady Wilmington, though less furious than her Lord, was extremely hurt, as well as offended, with her imprudent daughter's conduct; for which Lady Bell, in a note she left on her mother's writing-table, did not deign to apologize: after saying that she was on the point of putting herself under the protection of Captain Darnford, she added a hope, that she and her father would not refuse their pardon for this step, which she had judged essential to her happiness.

Although Mrs. Mourtray had been little inclined to talk of this event with Madame Duplin, it furnished her not only with conversation for the rest of the day, but likewise with a vast field for conjecture as to its consequences.

But it sincerely pained Emma, who, though she blamed, could not help loving Lady Bell more than she deserved; for she did not forget, that she had been her first,

first, and, till lately, her dearest friend; and it had not been without a severe struggle with her feelings, that she had broken off an intimacy, which had once been her chief happiness, but which, when she discovered her faulty principles, she could no longer continue with her own approbation.

CHAP. IV.

AS soon as Captain Manders was supposed to be completely out of danger, Mrs. Mourtray again opened her house to her friends, and Chowles, who had most reluctantly submitted to be thus long excluded from the sight of Emma, now renewed his incessant visits and persecutions, in despite of the chilling reception he received from her.

There was no moment in which Mrs. Mourtray would not have rejoiced in his company, but his unfeeling disposition had too much disgusted her husband, for him to permit any exception to be made in his favour, during the late period of distress in his family.

As

As Lady Wilmington had honoured Mrs. Mourtray with a morning call at her door, when she heard of the cruel uneasiness Henry had occasioned, the Mourtrays returned the compliment, by waiting upon her soon after Lady Bell's trip to Scotland. They were not admitted; but the next day Emma received a note from her Ladyship, desiring she would come and dine with her; adding, she should be quite alone, as Lord Wilmington and Lady Elizabeth were gone to Windsor.

Emma, therefore, had no objection to accept her invitation, and the less, because she should not probably have another opportunity of waiting upon her; it being decided by her father, whether his house at Downton were ready or not, that the moment he had finished settling Henry's affairs, the family should return thither, and shift as well as they could.

He

He now only waited to conclude his business, till his lawyer had thoroughly investigated what appeared an usurious demand of one of his son's creditors, to summon him to town. He was yet ignorant what profession he might choose, for, hitherto, Henry had come to no decision on the subject. Mourtray, therefore, pressed urgently for this, as he neither wished him to leave the country till that point was decided, nor till he had paid the whole of his debts.

Lady Wilmington received Emma with infinitely more cordiality than was her usual custom. The chagrin occasioned by her daughter's folly, had seriously affected her health, and her proud disposition seemed softened by grief.

She enquired, with some degree of interest, after her parents, whose sufferings, as such, her own had taught her to commiserate;

miserate; and she requested to hear the particulars of Henry's unhappy story.

As great part of it was already too well known in the world, Emma, when she related it, did not attempt to disguise facts; but she omitted those circumstances which the Countess might not have heard.

“ Ah! my wretched daughter,” said Lady Wilmington, when Emma ceased speaking, “ and your brother, resemble each other greatly in character. Both are wild and volatile; vain, inconsiderate, and extravagant; caring little for others, and feeling only for themselves.---Henry Mourtray, however, may retrieve his character, which (excuse my saying) he has somewhat disgraced by leaving the army at this time: but, should he repent of his errors, and reform his conduct, *he* may again be a comfort to his family; and though he has lost, by his own fault,
a very

a very advantageous establishment, yet, as he is a handsome youth, some other *Miss* of fortune may take a fancy to him, and, perhaps, he may marry extremely well.

“ Far different is the case with Bell!—Born and educated to fill a distinguished place in the world, she has, irreparably, disgraced one of the first families in the kingdom; destroyed my peace; disappointed all her father’s views for her own as well as his advantage; and, probably, injured Elizabeth most essentially; for when one girl commits any notorious folly, the good-natured world readily believes her sister inclined to do the same.—To conclude; all these evils Bell has brought upon herself and others,—to throw herself, most indelicately, into the arms of a gamester, a profligate, a man of no birth, who has nothing but his sword to depend upon!”

Emma

Emma wished extremely to say something to soften Lady Wilmington's displeasure; but her countenance, which at first appeared mild and languid, had now resumed its native haughtiness, and her eyes flashed with indignant fire, while she enumerated her causes of complaint against her daughter.

Emma, however, as much as she dared, gently felt her way, but she could not get on; for Lady Wilmington, holding up her finger, said, sternly, "Not one word will I hear, Miss Mourtray, in her favour; no:—I neither can, nor will, shew her any indulgence, for she deserves none: especially while her sister is unmarried, who, possibly, might take it into her head to act as wrong, if she saw I could so easily forgive."

Emma, now, could only wish that Lady Elizabeth was well married, foreseeing,
from

from this speech, that Lady Wilmington would then cease to be inexorable.

After a short silence, she was agreeably surprized to hear the Countess acknowledge herself greatly obliged to her, for the pains she had taken to dissuade Lady Bell from marrying Darnford. "This I discovered," said she, "on looking over her papers: amongst these, there was a rough copy of a letter to that odious man, in which she mentions, with asperity, the arguments you had used to detach her from him; promising, however, not to attend to your absurd prudence.—Would to God Bell had listened to your excellent advice; and that her principles had been like your's! How much misery, then, would she not have spared herself, and us all!"

Emma was much gratified by Lady Wilmington's commendations, and the

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more

more so, as she was not apt to be liberal in bestowing them.

As the Countess was indisposed, she did not leave her dressing-room, where the cloth was laid for dinner; and, just as it was bringing upon the table, Lord Miramont, very unexpectedly, arrived. "I came, Madam," said he, "to have the pleasure of dining *tête-à-tête* with you; but I see you have provided yourself with very agreeable company:" and advancing to Emma, he asked a thousand questions about her health, and that of her family; lamenting, with warmth, the length of time which had passed since he had seen her.

Emma, blushing and confused, could scarcely articulate, when she attempted to answer him; her spirits were in such a flutter, that she hastened to take her seat at the table, and to swallow, as fast
as

as she could, the soup that was placed before her.

“ Pray, Madam,” said Lord Miramont to his aunt, “ have you observed how much I am reformed, and how exactly-I hit your dinner hour? You see, I am now become all punctuality.”

“ This is something very new,” answered Lady Wilmington, laughing, “ and must proceed from some extraordinary motive. I do not, however, recollect having told you, when you called this morning, that Miss Mourtray was to dine with me; I am, therefore, at a loss to account, after having neglected me for some time, how you came suddenly to be seized with such a particular fit of affection towards me.”

Lord Miramont coloured; and attempted to justify himself from the accusation of having neglected his aunt, whom

he declared was not only inexpressibly dear to him, but whose society he liked beyond all others.

This was one of the pleasantest days Emma had ever passed. Lady Wilmington, though unwell, and rather out of spirits, after a little while, when she became cordial with her nephew, got into high good humour; and Lord Miramont was so extremely agreeable, and attentive in his behaviour to Emma, that she was more than ever charmed with him.

After coffee, the Countess complained of the head-ache, but she would not suffer her guests to leave her; she only begged they would permit her to lie down on her *chaise longue*.—To avoid disturbing her, they took their seats in a window opening into a balcony filled with plants and flowers, where they conversed in a low voice together.

Emma

Emma, who had not ventured to ask Lady Wilmington what had become of Lady Bell since her marriage, now learned, from Lord Miramont, that she and her husband went immediately afterwards to Scarborough; and that it was reported he was exceedingly disappointed, when he found that his wife would not become entitled to her fortune, till she became of age.

Emma said, she apprehended she would have but too much cause to lament her indiscretion; in which opinion Lord Miramont joined; assuring Emma, that he would neglect nothing to bring about a reconciliation between Lord and Lady Wilmington and his cousin:—"Though I have little hopes," continued he, "of succeeding with the former, who is altogether as harsh to the frailties of others as he is indulgent to his own. Besides, I am rather upon cool terms with him, of which my aunt is ignorant, and I could

not tell her this, as I knew it would vex her; but that is the reason why I have, of late, been here so seldom."

Lord Miramont then chatted with her, on various subjects, with all the cordiality of friendship; but when she mentioned her approaching departure for the country, she fancied he started; and, from that instant, he became grave, and occasionally pensive.

After a silence of some moments, he said:—"Going into the country!—going where I shall never see you!"

"Ah!" thought Emma, "that is your own fault;" but she said nothing.

"Why leave town, dear Miss Mourtray?" cried he, earnestly; "why leave a place that you are formed to adorn?"

"To

"To attend my parents," she answered ;
 "and so insignificant an object as myself
 can never be missed any where."

"Insignificant !" exclaimed he :—"no,
 no !—who so lovely, so good ; and who
 so much admired, as Miss Mourtray !"

At that instant Lady Wilmington,
 (rather *mal à propos* in the opinion of
 Emma) desired him to ring the bell ; and,
 tea being brought, no further conversa-
 tion passed between the two young peo-
 ple ; yet he had said enough to infuse
 into her mind a more sanguine belief of
 his attachment than she had ever yet in-
 dulg'd ; for his eyes, and the accent of
 his voice, expressed what his lips, for some
 cause she could not penetrate, seemed to
 hesitate to pronounce.

It was late in the evening before the
 Countess would part with her ; nor did
 Lord Miramont retire till he had con-
 ducted

ducted her to Mrs. Mourtray's carriage, when he gently pressed her hand, and bade her farewell.

But it was not destined that Emma should long, undisturbed, enjoy her present delicious sensations; for the first news she heard, when she got home, was, that her mother had been in fits, having just heard some unpleasant intelligence about her brother.

"My God!" cried Emma, softly—"what can have happened now?"—and then she asked after her father.

"La, Ma'am, he's gone out with Squire Sydney," answered Peter.

"With Mr. Sydney!" exclaimed Emma, going up stairs to see her mother; but Peter stopped her, saying, that his Lady had fallen into a slumber; and that Mrs. Jay (her maid) desired as how she would

would not go up, for fear of disturbing her mistress.

“Why did not you,” said Emma, “come directly, and fetch me the moment my mother was taken ill?”

“Why, la, Ma’am, the carriage went for you an hour and half ago, just after all this piece of work happened!”

Emma well recollected she had kept it waiting, being then too agreeably engaged to think of time; but now she enquired what had happened?

“If you won’t be angry, Ma’am,” said Peter, looking very ruefully, “you shall hear the whole story:—Mr. Chowles was above, playing at *gammon* with mistress, and master was out. Rap-tap goes the door: up runs I, thinking ’twas master, but ’twas Squire Sydney; and so he axes after master, and seemed desperate vexed

that he was abroad; and so then he axes after the Captain, if he'd been home, and such like. Lord blefs me! I cou'd tell no more about him than the child unborn! So then, fays he, I must go and look for him: I cannot think where he can be; but fay nothing to your Lady about him, or that I've been here; and, juft then, who shou'd come but master; so, after they had talked together a bit, out they both went: then the bell begun ring, ring; and up I went, and so miffrefs wou'd know who'd been in the house; and I told a fib or two; but, somehow, she got the whole out of me, for I had no thought of mischief; and there she begins crying and screaming, and making such a to do, I thought, verily, I shou'd have gone crazy; and so"

"Well, well; that is enough," cried Emma: "you should not have told my mother what Mr. Sydney bade you not tell."

She

She now went softly to her mother's chamber door; and having listened some time, without hearing the least noise, she hoped she was asleep, and returned to the drawing-room, where she found her father, just come home: his pallid cheeks denoted the perturbation of his mind; but her account of her mother's quiet repose somewhat tranquilized him.

Emma, full of anxiety, eagerly enquired the cause of this fresh alarm concerning Henry.

"My dear girl," answered Mourtray; "that rash boy will certainly be my death!—God forgive him for it!—Just as I had arranged his affairs, and saw some little prospect of tranquillity, after so much sorrow and trouble, I learn that he is gone off!—for what purpose it is impossible to conceive."

“Is it possible,” cried Emma, “that he should thus vex the best of fathers, and fly from Sydney, who had been so kind to him!”

“O! these are considerations that he never thought about: some mad scheme darted into his brain, and instantly he determined to put it into execution. It seems, after appearing tolerably quiet and composed for some days, and discussing frequently, with Sydney, different plans for his future way of life, they retired to their respective chambers, on Sunday night: early on the following morning Sydney was obliged to go on some business to ———, fourteen miles from his habitation, and he left (as he thought) Henry fast asleep in bed; but, on his return in the evening, to his great astonishment, he learned that Henry had never been seen the whole day; and that it was plain he had not been in bed the preceding night. You may imagine how
much

much poor Sydney was chagrined, and, no doubt, provoked, at being thus duped by this ungrateful boy; who, when he bade him good night, on Sunday, shook him cordially by the hand, asking whether he should return the next day to dinner?

"Sydney answered, he was afraid he should not get back in time; which, I suppose, suited Henry's views extremely. Sydney then set out, endeavouring to discover which way he was gone, but to no purpose, for he could not trace him; and now he is come to town, having, as he said, some hopes that Henry might have let me into his plans; and here, of course, he was disappointed.

"As I had heard, accidentally, that Sidbourne was returned to Harley Street, Sydney, after he had told me this pretty story, proposed that we should go thither, and enquire whether Henry had made
any

any attempt to see Miss Silbourne; but we could hear nothing of him, and the family will set out to-morrow for Yorkshire.

"Had Henry disappeared in the morning, I might have supposed that he had, in his walks, been arrested for debt; but as he and Sydney parted at eleven o'clock at night, and that he did not go to bed, it is certain that he sallied forth at break of day; yet he took nothing with him."

"Surely," cried Emma, "he is not bent on fighting Manders again."

"That idea occurred to me," said Mourtray; "but Manders is safe in his father's house, going shortly to Bristol for the recovery of his health: in short, my dear Emma, it is in vain to reason on the actions of a man who has no reason, and, I fear, as little heart."

"To

"To-morrow we must try to pacify and comfort your poor mother; and now let us retire to rest, my love, and humbly implore the Almighty to calm our troubled minds, and guard this unhappy wanderer from committing some desperate act, that may ruin him for ever."

Emma, bathed in tears, hung upon her father's neck; and, whilst he fondly pressed her to his bosom, he forgot, for a moment, the sorrows that preyed on his heart.

The next morning, Mrs. Mourtray being much restored by sleep, she learned the particulars of her son's flight; and, after all that has been related of her fondness for him, as well as of the little command she had over her passions, it may easily be conceived what she said and did on this occasion: she wanted to write both to Manders and Silbourne, to conjure them to tell her if they could account for Henry's disappearance; but

Mourtray,

Mourtray, at last, prevailed upon her to abandon this measure, demonstrating its inutility.

Emma, some days before, had written to Selina, requesting permission to wait upon her; and, in answer, she received a civil but rather cold excuse, probably dictated by her father, begging leave to defer having the pleasure of seeing her till the following winter, when they might meet (she hoped) without any painful retrospections.

of the last respectability in the island who, by his late cousin's papers, appeared to have lived in habits of friendship. This gentleman informed him

A LARGE packet, from Antigua, which Mourtray found on his table the evening of Sydney's arrival in town, he had not the courage to open till the following morning: nothing could be less agreeable than the contents; his agent, to his great amazement, had not received the remittance he had sent, through Chowles, who had undertaken this business; and, upon enquiry, he protested he had not neglected it.

The account of the law-suit was the most unpromising possible: in short, every thing relative to the estate was painted, by the agent, in the gloomiest colours.

On the other hand, Mourtray received a letter from a man of large fortune, and
of

of the first respectability in the island; who, by his late cousin's papers, appeared to have lived with him in habits of friendship. This Gentleman informed him, that the pending suit seemed likely to end in his disfavour, entirely owing to the fault of his agent, whom he insinuated to be a very worthless fellow; he, therefore, strenuously urged him to come over himself, without delay; assuring him that, by a little personal exertion, and taking measures which he would take the liberty to recommend, he had no doubt of speedily having the pleasure of seeing him in possession of the estate; which, by every principle of equity, he considered as his indisputable right.

The very perplexing state of Mourtray's affairs, in Antigua, called loudly upon him to decide, directly, on some measure to disentangle them; and to prevent his agent from further impoverishing him, by drawing bills that he could
not

not pay, without the utmost inconvenience.

The liberality of his cousin had, indeed, enabled him to render the favourite seat of his ancestors comfortable: perhaps, however, it might have been better, had he never possessed the means of improving it; for this unfortunate legacy had given birth to some idle projects of his own, which he had been in too much haste to effectuate: it had filled his wife with notions that she never, but for this, would have entertained of the necessity of living in a certain style in the world; and certainly it had been one of the principal causes of his son's ruin; who, had it not been for this, could neither have obtained credit to support his extravagance, nor have dared to plunge into it.

Mourtray's first idea, dictated by despair, was to renounce all claim to the estate in question; and retiring with his
family

family to Downton, there to end his days in obscurity ; but maturer reflection made him hesitate in adopting this plan : it seemed a sort of ingratitude to the memory of his cousin, thus petulantly to relinquish the bounty he had bestowed, and which undoubtedly was meant not merely for his own, but likewise for the benefit of his children.

Wrong and eccentric as was Henry's conduct, Mourtray's heart reminded him, that still he was his son : that bade him hope a time would yet come when this son, ceasing to be an alien from his family, might become a worthy member of society, and be the comfort of his declining years.

• But if he ought not to neglect his interest, still less ought he to neglect *that* of the amiable, the dutiful Emma ; for whom no other provision had been made than five thousand pounds after her mother's

ther's decease : the idea of being enabled hereafter to reward her merit, decided his fluctuating opinions ; and he felt, such a motive would invigorate those exertions that he now persuaded himself it was his duty to make.

He shrank, however, in dismay from the task of announcing to his family, especially to his wife, the resolution he had taken of going immediately to Antigua, to undertake himself the management of his affairs, and never to return to England till he had settled them to his satisfaction.

To avoid the opposition he expected to encounter from Mrs. Mourtray, he secretly made his arrangements and preparations for his voyage with all possible dispatch : his lawyer (who was likewise his confidential friend) being the only person to whom he communicated his plan.

Every

Every thing being ready for his departure, he was on the point of making the dreaded disclosure to his family, when he received a letter from Henry, without either date or post-mark; and as this, though extremely unpleasant in general as to its contents, relieved him, however, from all apprehensions concerning his safety, he determined to keep it in reserve, as likely to afford his wife some degree of consolation for the vexatious news he had to impart.

With the utmost tenderness, after stating his reasons for the measure, he broke it to her. But no language can describe her astonishment, or the variety of her emotions: she burst into a violent passion of tears; accused him of monstrous cruelty; bitterly complained that every body deserted her; and at length, finding him callous to her reproaches, she changed her battery, and had recourse to prayers and entreaties.

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These Mourtray was less able to withstand; yet, being thoroughly convinced of the propriety of his resolution, he remained inflexible: he therefore contented himself with gently soothing her, and holding out to her view the hopes he had of returning possessed of such affluence as would amply compensate for a short separation, as well as for the privation of some indulgencies, which he could at present no longer afford to grant; and then, when she appeared somewhat pacified by this prospect of future happiness, and was become tolerably calm, he read to her the following letter from Henry.

“ My dear Sir,

“ I am almost equally embarrassed, whether to remain silent, or to write; but, as I apprehend my disappearance may occasion you and my mother more alarm and uneasiness than, perhaps, I deserve to have felt for me, I take the liberty of addressing you with a few lines.

“ You

"You will naturally expect that I should account for the extraordinary step I have taken; yet that is impossible, as I should thereby frustrate my purpose:—all I can say is, that I declare my departure from the farm, was not a premeditated scheme, but in consequence of a sudden thought that darted into my head, when I found Sydney's intended absence would so much favour my flight.

"Two objects, of the utmost importance (I may say, to my very existence), I had at that time in view: in one of these I have, unfortunately, been disappointed; and should I be equally unsuccessful in the other, you shall never hear more of an unhappy son, who has been the wretched cause of affliction to the best of fathers.—
 A something, however, in my breast, whispers me, that I shall, some future day, dare to meet your eye without blushing, and that my conduct will entitle me to receive the pardon, the blessing, and
 the

the approbation of my dear parents; for whose happiness, as well as that of my sister's, I shall ever pray.

“ I have written a line to Sydney, to whose kind friendship I think myself highly indebted.—Let my mother have no anxiety about my health; I am well, but doubt whether ever again I shall feel happy. However, I will try, at least, to be reconciled to myself; in the meanwhile, suffer me to hope that you will sometimes think with pity and indulgence on,

“ Your affectionate, dutiful,

“ but unhappy son,

“ HENRY MOURTRAY.”

This letter produced the effect Mourtray expected from it on his wife:—Certain that her son was alive and well, she easily persuaded herself, that, without money or resources, he would soon be tired of pursuing whatever wild scheme

he had embraced, and be glad to throw himself into the arms of his family: nor did Mourtray differ much with her in opinion on this point.

Henry's intentions, however, were couched in terms too obscure to be fathomed by either; nor did his letter to Sydney contain any expression that could serve to elucidate them. It consisted merely of apologies for his abrupt departure—acknowledgments of gratitude for his kindness—and good wishes for his health and happiness.

Sydney, the moment he had received this letter, hastened with it to Mourtray, who desired he would wait till the following day, before he mentioned it to his wife or daughter, for reasons that he would hereafter explain.

No sooner had Mourtray got over the abovementioned unpleasant scene with
his

his wife, than he sent for Emma, to make the same disclosure to her: but her behaviour was very different from her mother's.—To lose the society of her beloved father, was the severest blow she could receive; and her exquisite sensibility made her feel it most poignantly; but, having long observed the state of extreme dejection into which he had gradually sunk, she saw, immediately, that she ought not to deplore any circumstance that would rouse him from it; and whether his exertions, were or were not successful, she knew that he would console himself, whatever might be the event, when he was conscious he had done his duty by his family.

Instead of giving way to unavailing grief, she hastened to assure her father, that the whole study of her life, during his absence, should be to please and comfort her mother.

He embraced her tenderly, and then both went to join Mrs. Mourtray, whom, to their great astonishment, they found just as composed as if nothing had happened to disturb her. The cause of this sudden change they forbore to enquire, nor did she communicate it, meaning, for the present, to keep it a profound secret in her own breast.

The fact was, she had hit on a scheme, whence she promised to herself infinite consolation; and while her husband and daughter had been holding their conference, she had dispatched a note to Chowles, requesting to see him as speedily as possible. She had received an answer, in which he promised to obey her commands early in the evening; and the thoughts of this interview occasioned the tranquillity that amazed her family.

Sydney that day dined in Wimpole Street: an unusual sadness hung on his brow,

brow, which all the family remarked, even before he had heard of Mourtray's intended departure,—a circumstance not likely to clear it, as he loved and respected him full as much as if he had been his father.

On their noticing his dejection, he said, he had just received very disagreeable intelligence relative to the declining state of his mother's health:—"I mean," said he, "to go, with all possible expedition, to Florence. Early to-morrow morning I set out; but whatever haste I make, I greatly apprehend arriving too late."

Mrs. Mourtray, who held Lady Clannarmon's character in the utmost contempt, and who could not conceive that her death could, even by her own son, be considered as a misfortune, especially as he would gain by it a title and an estate, coolly observed, that were she in his place, she should hesitate to undertake a

long journey in such very warm weather, perhaps to no purpose.

“The trifling inconvenience you mention, Madam,” said Sydney, with some displeasure, “is unworthy of a thought: could I but hope to arrive in time to afford the slightest consolation to a dying parent—good God! how amply should I be rewarded for any pain or trouble that I could possibly suffer!”

“All this would be mighty well,” replied Mrs. Mourtray, “if Lady Clannarmon behaved kind and tenderly to you; but—.”

“Spare me on this subject, I entreat, Madam,” interrupted Sydney with warmth; “and you would oblige me by recollecting, that I have often assured you I have no cause to complain of my mother.—But my ardent wish to see her, is not merely

merely on my own account, for I have a more important object in view."

He did not explain what this was, but Mourtray, who knew his generous solicitude relative to his brother, easily guessed it was to make another effort in his favour with Lady Clannarmon.

Sydney heard, with great concern, that Mourtray was going to be separated from his family, being sensible how much his amiable daughter, to whom he was deservedly so very dear, would feel his loss. He thought himself fortunate, after having taken leave of the rest of the family, that he had, before his departure, an opportunity of speaking for a few minutes with Emma alone.

Henry, at first, was the subject of their conversation; Sydney said, that, however unsuccessful he had been hitherto in his researches, to discover what was become

of that ill-fated young man, he would not be discouraged from persevering in in them; "for," added he, "during the short time he was my guest, he warmly engaged my affections:—before that time, in my endeavours to be of use to him, I had solely been actuated by my regard for his family."

With the most engaging sweetness, she thanked him for all the trouble he had taken to serve her unfortunate brother, and for the promise he had given her of still interesting himself in his fate; assuring him, that she should ever gratefully remember the active friendship he had shewn in the late distressing events; and lamenting, that Henry's eccentricities had rendered abortive all his kind exertions, as well as all the pains her father had taken, to restore him to comfort, and to his friends.

Sydney

Sydney delicately disclaimed having had any merit in the slight services he had rendered her brother; "would to God! Miss Mourtray," continued he, "it were, indeed, in my power to be of essential use to your dear father, or any part of his family; for what task should I think too difficult, to be repaid by you with one kind word—one smile of approbation."

"You far over-rate the value of such slight tokens of gratitude," said Emma, faintly smiling: "however, be assured, Mr. Sydney, my good wishes and highest esteem will ever attend you."

A tear glistened in Sydney's eyes, "Ah! dearest, beloved Miss Mourtray!" said he, "your esteem is most precious to me—could you but know what passes in my heart—but, no, I must not—I ought not—trouble you with a detail of my wretched-

ness. I too well know, that for me there is no hope—Adieu ! then, most amiable Miss Mourtray, I must fly from you ; yet let me have the consolation of believing, if, by any chance, you should ever have occasion for any friendly office that I can perform, you will remember that I am most truly, most faithfully, devoted to you for ever.”

And, as he finished these words, he hurried out of the room.—Emma was greatly affected ; the innumerable good qualities of Sydney, his indefatigable pains in every friendly exertion, and his total disregard of all that only affected himself, could not fail of securing him an interest in the hearts of all who knew him ; and had not Emma’s predilection in favour of the Marquis, rendered her insensible to all other men, it is probable that Sydney’s long and faithful attachment, which he so delicately forbore to plead, might

might not have been unfortunate; for, with the exception of beauty, he had every virtue that could gain esteem.—To an excellent and highly cultivated understanding, he united a thousand agreeable talents, elegant manners, and a sweetness of temper almost unequalled.

Chowles took his head—“Why, really, Ma’am,” said he, “I hardly know what to say to you; for your husband has determined on this measure without consulting me, which if he had done, I should have been clearly against it; because I don’t think he has a turn for business, and such like.”

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“Well,”

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CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

WHILE Sydney and Emma had been engaged in this farewell conference, Mrs. Mourtray had been closetted with Chowles, to whom she diffusely related all her grievances, to which he gave but a cold attention ; nevertheless, as she did not observe it, she concluded with saying, “ and now, my dear sir, I ask you as a friend, whom I know I can depend upon, what is to be done ? ”

Chowles shook his head, — “ Why, really, Ma’am,” said he, “ I hardly know what to say to you ; for your husband has determined on this measure without consulting me, which if he had done, I should have been clearly against it ; because I don’t think he has a turn for business, and such like.”

"Well, but since he is resolved to go," said Mrs. Mourtray impatiently, "I see no method of preventing him, unless, indeed, you employ your friendly interposition."

"Lord, Ma'am! why he'd mind no more any thing I could say, if I was to talk till I was black in the face, than if a dog barked."

"Then poor Emma and myself must submit to be again immured at Downton!"

"That need not be the case; for I'll tell you fairly, without mincing matters, that, if you'll persuade Mourtray to give me Emma (I shan't mind her being a little coy, or so), I'll take her without a sixpence; which, let me tell you, I think no unhandsome offer; and then you shall come and stay with me as long as you like; and as for Emma, she shall, as Mrs.

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Chowles,

ell,

Chowles, appear as fine as any Duchefs in the land, I promise you."

"Ah! if it depended upon me," said Mrs. Mourtray, sighing, "Emma should be your's this instant; I could not dispose of her more to my mind—but she, like other young girls, who know not what is best for them, seems averse to marriage; and I doubt whether Mr. Mourtray would enforce your suit as he ought."

"Why, then, Ma'am, nothing more can be said, or done; but 'tis a great pity—Only think of your daughter, with her handsome face, and queen-like figure, dressed in the richest clothes that hands can make; and covered from top to toe with the finest jewels! Only think of her lolling in the handsomest coach in London!—and then, what houses both in town and country, what a sumptuous table, and what a tribe of servants she will have!

—All

—All this, give me leave to say, merits some reflection before 'tis refused."

"Refused! good Heaven Mr. Chowles, if it is refused, after all you have said, I shall think my daughter, and my husband too, stark-staring mad: however, he is below, and I will go directly, and mention the affair to him.—If he would but speak forcibly to Emma, she is really so good a girl, that I have no doubt he might persuade her to accept a proposal, which, in my opinion, is highly honourable on your part, and is certainly, by far, the most advantageous she will ever receive."

Chowles, who was troubled with no delicate scruples, cared little, if he could but obtain Emma's hand, whether or not he possessed her affections; and he easily flattered himself that Mourtray, whom he knew to be perplexed at the state of his affairs, and pinched by the disbursements that he had made for his son, would

would not turn a deaf ear to his proposal, which he had purposely dressed out in the gaudiest colours to dazzle the eyes of Mrs. Mourtray.

While he was solacing himself with hopes, his advocate, with a volubility that astonished her husband, informed him of the offer made by Chowles; expatiating warmly on his generosity, and on the prodigious advantages that would accrue to the family if it were accepted. But Mourtray listened to her harangue with such provoking coldness, that she exclaimed—"Lord bless me, Mr. Mourtray, you are really too bad! Think, I beseech you, what an offer this is! When you become Chowles's father-in-law, all your embarrassments will be at an end; for, then, you may command what money you please; and, of course, your voyage to Antigua will be quite unnecessary.—As to Emma's squeamishness, that is all nonsense; she will hereafter re-
joice

joice that she was not suffered to indulge it: and only think how happy I shall be at Clapham!"

"Ay," thought Mourtray; "the true motive of all this eagerness to marry poor Emma to a man she hates, is comprised in one short sentence,—*how happy I shall be at Clapham!*"

"Do speak, Mr. Mourtray," cried she: "your silent fits are very unseasonable at present."

"I have very little to say," answered he: "send for Emma; tell her yourself what Chowles proposes; I shall say nothing to counteract your wishes, neither shall I support them by persuasion: on a matter of such importance, she shall decide for herself."

Emma was summoned, and appeared.—Mrs. Mourtray, then, with all the eloquence

quence she possessed, pleaded for her friend Chowles; extolling his generosity and magnificence; expatiating on the innumerable advantages such a match would procure, not only to herself, but to her dear father, and every branch of her family; and, above all, on the delight it would give her to pass the summer at his beautiful villa; not in an out-of-the-way part of the world like Downton, but situated in a charming neighbourhood, and within a pleasant airing of London.

During this oration, Emma fixed her eyes expressively on her father, to penetrate his sentiments; and, as soon as her mother ceased speaking, she went and took his hand.

“If I marry Mr. Chowles,” said she, “will you, Papa, continue in England?”

“Certainly

"Certainly not; I must go to Antigua; the interest of my family, especially that of your brother, renders my voyage thither indispensable; for with every returning day I feel more clearly convinced, that I alone can settle my perplexing affairs there."

"Would you permit Mr. Chowles materially to assist you in these?"

"By no means: for I will never owe pecuniary obligations to any man."

"God Almighty be praised!" cried Emma, raising her fine eyes to Heaven, "that this sacrifice, the most cruel that could be imposed upon me, may be dispensed with!—If, by marrying this man, I could save my dearest father a long and dangerous voyage, rendered more so on account of the war; and thereby detain him, to be the joy and comfort of his family, to whom he is justly so dear—I
might

might have hesitated.—If, indeed, by this sacrifice, I could hope to extricate him from the difficulties that harass him, and that nothing less could save my mother and brother from being reduced to absolute want,—then, certainly I would, without repining, submit to my fate ; for whatever misery I should endure, would be softened by the reflection, that I had done my duty.—But, if by rendering myself completely wretched, I should neither do my parents, nor my brother, any essential service, and only gain for myself affluence, which I despise,—I do not hesitate, in positively rejecting Mr. Chowles's offer."

" My dear Emma, let me beg, let me entreat you," cried Mrs. Mourtray, " to take time to consider of it : recollect all I have told you, and how happy your acceptance would make me."

" I flat-

“ I flattered myself,” said Emma, “ that I had convinced you, Madam, that your happiness is extremely dear to me ; but excuse my adding, that I cannot suppose my dear Mamma would, for the sake of so insignificant a matter as passing a summer at Clapham, rather than in her own house, with her child to pass every summer of her life, and every winter, too, with a man who is perfectly odious to her.”

Mrs. Mourtray coloured ; she felt that Emma perceived the littleness of mind she had betrayed on this occasion ; her courage failed her, and she dared not press her daughter to become miserable. — Emma, too, appeared at this moment so noble, so generous, with such animation in her beautiful countenance, and such grace in her manner, that Mrs. Mourtray, though abashed and mortified, could not refrain from admiring her.

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As for Mourtray, he was too well acquainted with his daughter to be in the least surprized at her behaviour; she had precisely acted as he had expected; and a tear that fell upon her cheek, as he fondly folded her to his bosom, more forcibly expressed how he was touched by it, than any words he could use.

Nothing, then, remained to be done, but for Mrs. Mourtray to return to Chowles, and acquaint him with the ill success of her mission.—He was very much vexed, as well as disappointed; but he was forced to relinquish a suit, which he saw he should have no chance of carrying, with such a decided majority in the family against it. He did not, however, do this with a good grace; for he sharply reproached Mrs. Mourtray, with having been lukewarm in the business.

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She fired at the injustice of this accusation, and said, since he took matters so, and used his friends so ill, she was not sorry at his disappointment. This enraged him violently, and he went away muttering,—that he was a cursed ass ever to think of a girl who had a fool for her mother.

So rude and impertinent a speech sunk deeply into Mrs. Mourtray's mind, who retained against her former favourite much ill will for a long time.

With his cousins, the Proutings, she had of late been a good deal disgusted; and, during her short remaining stay in town, she saw no more of any of the family.

While Mrs. Mourtray had been holding this sharp dialogue with Chowles, her husband had been pouring out the tenderest effusions of paternal affection to his
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beloved Emma:—"My child," said he, "thou sweet comfort of my life, for whose sake (I was almost going to say) *alone*, I wish to live, be assured I never entertained the most distant idea of constraining you to give your hand unaccompanied by your heart: nay, so far from it, I never have even hinted to you, that I had yet seen that man whom I could approve as your husband; nor do I seek to dive into the secrets of your heart: yet, one word before we part: if that heart, my Emma, should acknowledge any preference, I promise you my concurrence in whatever choice you may make; and here I give it you, in writing (giving her a sealed paper). Such unlimited confidence is not dangerous with you; but, on the contrary, will inspire your generous nature with double caution, that *your* actions may prove I did not think too well of my daughter."

"Ah!

“ Ah! my father!—my beloved father!” cried Emma, bursting into tears; “ surely no girl was ever blessed with such an indulgent parent as myself!—I cannot, however, no, I feel it is impossible, to let you depart without revealing to you every thought of my soul.—Know, then what shall I say?—how can I confess to you, that I fear my heart is no longer in my own power.”

Emma hung her head, her cheeks burning, and her emotion almost stifling her words; but Mourtray, who saw her confusion, encouraged her to proceed.

“ Fear nothing, my dear girl,” said he, pressing her hand tenderly:—“ if a full confession of your sentiments will be any relief to your mind; if my counsels can be of use to you, speak:—if not, be silent; for I abhor the idea of wringing a secret, even from my own child.”

“What a monster that child must be,” cried Emma, “who could persist in keeping a secret from such a father!—I am not that monster, dear Papa. In short, not always recollecting your prudent advice, to be cautious in taking sudden predilections, no sooner did I see . . . Lord Miramont . . . than, forgetting the difference of our situations, and the innumerable obstacles that formed a barrier between us my foolish heart, nevertheless, from that instant, became entirely his own.”

“I must own, I am very sorry for it,” said Mourtray; “for, though I am little acquainted with this young nobleman, report speaks unfavourably of his principles. It would hurt me less to hear you had fallen in love with some indigent, but honest, worthy man, than with a person of Lord Miramont’s high rank, but whose moral character appears very doubtful: yet, tell me, have you any reason to believe

lieve, my child, that he is, in the least, partial to you? I have always understood, that he had a very improper attachment: *that* alone, I should have thought, would have repressed your partiality towards him."

"It is too true," said Emma, "that he has either a real or an ostensible attachment, which I acknowledge to be very shocking; yet, I must confess, that I have sometimes not only thought that he was disengaging himself from it, but, likewise, that he by no means regarded me with indifference; though, I fear, you will think this merely the suggestions of vanity."

"My dear Emma," said Mourtray, shaking his head—"as it seems destined that no creature should be perfect, *this*, unfortunately, is your weak-point: I mean, that readiness to believe that others entertain the same partiality for you,

which your susceptibility so speedily imbibes for them: now I love you too well to conceal, that this notion originates in vanity; and, if not checked, will be the source of incessant mortifications to you: hence your credulity, in regard to your first friend, Lady Isabella, in whose friendship and character (as I foretold) you have only met disappointment: a second, more grievous, perhaps, awaits you in Lord Miramont. However, should I be mistaken, and should he really propose to you, let me conjure you, my dearest girl, neither to be softened by a romantic passion, nor yet to be dazzled by the splendour of his situation; but firmly to refuse giving him your hand, unless you are perfectly convinced of the entire reformation of his morals: of all evils, none ought more carefully to be avoided, than an union between a virtuous and an immoral mind: it is not only risking the whole of your temporal, but even of your eternal felicity; for, alas! the contagion
of

of vice is the most subtle of all poisons. Believe me, few women ever succeed in reforming their husbands, though numberless instances may be given of men, who contaminate the principles of their wives."

" I promise you, my dear Papa," said Emma, weeping, " that no consideration should induce me to marry Lord Miramont, were he to honour me with the offer of his hand, unless his conduct became such as you could approve : in the mean while, I will correct my own faults."

" I rely on your promise in both respects ; and now, let me thank and applaud you for the ingenuous confession you have made. Without meaning to reproach you, my Emma, I must observe, that, had you reposed this confidence in me, when first you became acquainted with the Marquis, you would probably

have spared yourself much uneasiness; and, I flatter myself, I should have taught you how to stifle this passion in its infancy. It is not, however, yet too late; at least, to curb it: perform, therefore, with redoubled diligence, all your religious duties, avoid all light reading, and keep yourself constantly usefully employed.— May God Almighty strengthen your mind, and preserve you !”

The father and daughter now separated: the former, though pained by what he had heard, saw more to admire than to blame in his sweet Emma; and the latter, while she felt her bosom lightened by the honest avowal of her weakness, adored her excellent parent's goodness and indulgence.

Every thing being now ready for the Mourtrays departure from town, though the house at Downton was not quite so
for

for their reception, Mrs. Mourtray and Emma agreed, rather to submit to some inconvenience, than forego the melancholy pleasure of performing the journey in Mourtray's company; for Downton was only a few miles out of the direct road to Falmouth, where he was to embark; thither, therefore, he himself conducted them.

After staying one day to set his affairs in some order, he took a very tender farewell of his wife and daughter, and proceeded on his journey.—Mrs. Mourtray, at first, gave way to the most extravagant grief, whilst Emma, who was more deeply affected, deemed it right to check her own sorrow, that she might be enabled to sooth that of her mother's: the latter soon became tolerably composed, and found some amusement in contriving and adapting her old furniture, to fit the modernized apartments of her house.

While she was bustling about, she only occasionally, when any thing went wrong, renewed her lamentations at her husband's absence,—at her son's disappearance,—and at her misfortune in living secluded from the world.

CHAP. VII.

BEFORE Emma left town, she had called, for a moment, to take leave of her French friends, who most sincerely lamented her departure; nor did she quit them without much regret. As her acquaintance with *Sidonie* had increased, she found her, in reality, possessed of all those amiable qualities, which she had once fancied belonged to Lady Bell.—The disappointment she had experienced in regard to that volatile lady, had taught her, that no durable attachment can subsist, where the parties materially differ in principle; but with *Sidonie*, whose mind was as pure as her own, and who had, besides, a very strong understanding, she had no apprehensions that her friendship could ever undergo any change.

After an absence of above five months, Emma was now once more settled on her native spot; the change it had undergone by the late improvements, however, struck her less than *that* she perceived in herself.

Her life at Downton, formerly, had passed smoothly on, without a single incident happening that left much impression on her mind. The most important occurrence then, was a visit to Wilmington. No cares, no passions, disturbed her serenity; only, now and then, a transient regret, when Lady Bell Fontelieu had warmed her imagination, by florid details of the gaities of London, ~~that~~ she could not participate in them.

The unexpected circumstance of the legacy, had, by opening a new scene to her, given rise to new passions, or, at least, had awakened those in her breast which had lain dormant before. Her
 person

person, too, was altered; she had lost somewhat of the appearance of rude health, and looked more delicate, without being less lovely. Her figure was better fashioned; her manners more elegant; and she had cultivated, with success, various accomplishments, particularly music:—to her proficiency on the piano-forte she had added singing; in which she had learned to excel, under *Cimador's* direction.

But her gay vivacity, alas! was impaired.—The departure of her father, whom she adored;—the strange absence of her brother;—and the disappointment she felt, that Lord Miramont had made no effort to detain her, although he seemed to lament that she was to leave town;—all these causes together, afforded matter for disquiet and regret. Sometimes, too, the recollection of poor Sydney, who loved her so tenderly, so respectfully, and yet

yet so hopelessly, drew a sigh of pity from her breast.

What her father had insinuated concerning her propensity to vanity, she could not help acknowledging to be true.—Possibly, then, misled by that, she had fancied what only existed in her own brain: and the Marquis, perfectly indifferent concerning her, had ceased, as soon as he no longer saw, to bestow a thought upon her.

Mortifying as was this reflection, Emma resolved to struggle against despondence. Still, however, in despite of her father's good advice, she did not attempt to conquer her partiality for Lord Miramont; because, though it might be deemed a weakness, it could not be deemed criminal; on the contrary, she imagined, while he remained single, she might cherish it, as it added an additional motive, to her ardent desire, of attaining every improve-

improvement of mind, that might make her appear more amiable in the eyes of him whom alone she wished to please.

In the mean while, the month of August seemed to her endless, for the only thing to which she looked forward with any satisfaction, during her father's absence, was the arrival of the Countess at Wilmington, who was shortly expected; and she would talk of her nephew. The Earl, to her great delight, could not annoy, or occasion her to interrupt her visits, for he was gone to Ireland, where he was expected to stay some time, to save his property there from the depredations of the rebels.

Whilst she was longing for Lady Wilmington to arrive, Mrs. Mourtray was suddenly made supremely happy, by the acquisition of some neighbours,—persons perfectly congenial to her disposition,
and

and with whom she had long been acquainted.

This fortunate event was occasioned by the following circumstance. Colonel and Mrs. Thornley had been driven from their house in Kent, by having what is called an excellent neighbourhood; which had only the small inconvenience of being very expensive: but this they disregarded, till certain impertinent people, acting very unceremoniously towards the Colonel, obliged him to make some arrangements unnecessary to relate.—The result of these was, that his estate of 1200*l.* a year went to nurse; and a small allowance from his creditors, with Mrs. Thornley's pin-money, remained for the maintenance of his family; he therefore judged it expedient to go upon a plan of economy, and hired a house in ———shire, within a mile of Downton.

This

This house, known by the name of the Cottage, had originally been a hunting-box; but its last proprietor having destroyed himself, about thirty years before it came into the hands of the Thornleys, it had, till then, excepting for a short period, been uninhabited: at first, for the absurd reason, that it was supposed to be haunted; and when that notion was exploded, its decayed state, and bleak situation (the few trees that once sheltered it having been hewn), afforded to those, who might have hired it, more solid objections.

Colonel Thornley, who had chiefly lived in an enclosed, now fancied he preferred an open country: the situation of the Cottage, therefore, delighted him; and finding it would be let at a very low rent, he hired it for a long term; the proprietor consenting to make some necessary repairs.

In

In consequence of this agreement, the house was rendered habitable, and assumed a spruce appearance, under the Colonel's direction, who was a very active, managing person; and, a little before the shooting season began, he, his wife, and sister, Miss Rebecca Thornley, arrived, to take possession of their new habitation.

These three persons were all noted for good-nature; one alone of them had an excellent understanding, the other two were far from being over-burthened with it, but all possessed a tolerable share of knowledge of the world.

The Colonel, a merry, good-humoured, though choleric man, took some pleasure in shooting; still more in cards; and the greatest of all, in eating and drinking.

His wife's joy was, to pass one half of her time in bed, and the other half in complete

complete indolence; only, occasionally, exerting herself so far, as to turn over the pages of a new novel: she had, however, no objection to a quiet game at cards, though she would be well satisfied without it, if let to repose on a couch, and not be forced to think of any thing.

Miss Rebecca Thornley was of a very different disposition; she was all activity, both mental and bodily; she generally thought both for her brother and his wife; and, having a small independent fortune of her own, she never seemed to suppose any other advantage could be derived from it, save that of being useful to them, and to every distressed person who came in her way.

She was several years younger than Colonel and Mrs. Thornley, who were nearly of the same age; and at this period Miss Thornley was about five and thirty; not handsome, nor yet ill-looking; but
the

the idea of marriage seemed never to have entered her head; and she suffered herself to be placed on the list of old maids, without marking the slightest displeasure.

She had enjoyed, with all her heart and soul, the gay festivities of her brother's Kentish house and neighbourhood, where almost the whole year used to pass as a continual carnival; and now, she appeared just as well pleased with her solitary abode on the Downs.

If she could get a horse, humanity alone curbed her bridle; else she could ride till the beast knocked up: if she could get none, she walked all over the country; provided she was in motion, she cared little where she went; but, if an act of kindness or charity was to be performed, she seemed endued with Herculean strength; and, then, neither wind nor weather, nor any other impediment could stop her perambulations.

When

When decorum obliged her to stay with the family, she read, or worked, incessantly; and at night, when she could get a party, she played at cards with the same perseverance.

No circumstance could affect the unalterable sweetness of her temper for more than an instant, nor any difficulty discourage her active benevolence:—Ingratitude might wound, but could not dishearten her; and although she had no memory to retain an injury, none possessed one more retentive of an obligation, however slight it might be.

Without having had the advantage of a superior education, she was, in a manner, self-taught; and seemed to know, by intuition, all that costs others much pains to learn: added to this, she never forgot what she had once read; and naturally possessed a lively playful wit, that acted
as

as a gentle stimulus, but never as a caustic.

Such was Miss Thornley;—who, relinquishing all the pleasures of the world, in which she was so well adapted to take a part, as also to contribute to those of others; but who, nevertheless, chose to bury herself in very dull society at the Cottage, merely because she knew, that her brother and sister, derived equal advantage from her fortune and her company.

To do them justice, however, they both loved her as well as they were capable of loving any thing; though not so much as she deserved. It is needless to mention, what a vast improvement such a family as the Thornleys were, in Mrs. Mourtray's opinion, to her neighbourhood.

The closest intimacy was immediately struck up between them: no day passed in which the families did not meet, and

no evening closed without a sociable game of cards.

Mrs. Mourtray, who had resumed all her former notability, bustled about her house as usual; and, while she pampered the Colonel's appetite with good old English dishes, of which she herself superintended the cookery, he declared she was the first of women, and that all others were idiots compared to her.

These commendations gratified Mrs. Mourtray not a little; he became her chief favourite.—Mrs. Thornley was rather too much of, what she called, a dawdle, to please her thoroughly, yet she was useful to make up a rubber; and Miss Thornley, who was equally convenient in this respect, amused and cheered her spirits.

Her house, now, was very comfortable; and, if the weather was particularly bad, she

she could give a bed to a friend or two:—upon the whole, therefore, she was happy; though, still she occasionally lamented the want of her husband and son's company; and perhaps still oftener, that her excellent coach remained useless, having no longer any horses to draw it.

Emma, at first, saw little in any of the Thornleys to interest her much, excepting for the sake of her mother. The Colonel's broad joke, and horse laugh, often offended her delicacy, whilst his gluttony disgusted her. The insipidity of Mrs. Thornley oppressed her, like a dead weight, which she could not throw off.—Miss Thornley, indeed, seemed the most bearable of the party: but she never appeared to less advantage than at a card-table, where Emma saw her far oftener than elsewhere.

The chief, and, perhaps, the only foible Rebecca had, was an uncontrollable
eager-

eagerness at play ; no matter how trifling the stake : and she would warmly contend about a fish, which she despised, or wrangle about the manner of playing a card ; though she had more solicitude to prove her skill, than to win the money of her friends, which she never did without reluctance.

At those times when Emma might have enjoyed her company, she was not to be found ; for either she was galloping over the country, or, with her seven-league boots, striding to some neighbouring town or village, to perform some commission for her indolent sister-in-law ; but more frequently on some errand of charity.

Some casual flashes of wit, or smart repartee, that escaped her lips, made Emma observe her with more attention : and no sooner had she done this, than she became

came sensible of, and admired the uncommon worth of her character.

But her acquaintance with Miss Thornley had not time to ripen into intimacy, for, about the end of September, the Countess and Lady Elizabeth arrived at Wilmington; and the former had only been three days in the country, when she wrote a very kind note to Emma, entreating her to come and stay some time with her, as she and her daughter were quite alone; Lord Wilmington being likely to be detained a long while in Ireland.—She likewise sent a civil, flattering, message to Mrs. Mourtray, to put her in good humour, that she might the more readily consent, to part with her daughter.

The society of the Thornleys, being quite sufficient, to prevent her mother from feeling any loss by her absence, Emma had no scruple in leaving her; and the day following was appointed, with

with Mrs. Mourtray's thorough approbation, for Lady Wilmington's carriage to fetch her from Downton.

Miss Thornley, with her usual good nature, promised Emma, when she took leave of her the night before her departure, that no morning should pass without her calling at Downton, to see if she could be of any use to Mrs. Mourtray.

CHAP. VIII.

EMMA felt her spirits unusually exhilarated as she entered the park gate at Wilmington; a presentiment she could not account for, whispered her, that some extraordinary pleasure awaited her; and in this humour she hastened to the Countess, whose reception was all she could wish.

Even Lady Elizabeth was gracious, for, in the country Emma's company was not to be despised; and as her Ladyship was particularly subject to *ennui*, the concomitant of idleness, she needed the assistance of a gay active mind to dispel it. "Do not imagine," said she, "that we shall be a female *trio*, for my brother, most unexpectedly, arrived last night, and with him a mighty pretty young man, Sir Harry Paragon, who came from Germany

many with him : we have, besides, an acquaintance of your's (Emma felt her face glow),—my cousin Miramont."

" Yes," said Lady Wilmington, " my nephew had the goodness to come hither, entirely in compliment to Fontelieu ; who has been induced to curtail his travels, owing to the disagreeable state of the continent."

Emma, though inexpressibly delighted, felt confused, and dared not raise her eyes from the carpet.—Before she left Downton, she had dressed for the day, but now she thought some change indispensable, at least in her head dress ; she hastened, therefore, to her chamber but could by no means decide what best became her.

At length she adjusted her hair tolerably to her satisfaction, and her toilet being finished, she went, with a beating heart,

heart, into the drawing-room, where all the company had long been assembled ; but she felt a sort of mist before her eyes, so that she could scarcely distinguish one person from another.

Lord Miramont's voice, however, she could not mistake : with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, he approached and took her hand, expressing great pleasure at seeing her ; but when she tried to say something civil in return, she spoke too inwardly to be heard.

Lady Wilmington then presented to her Lord Fontelieu, and Sir Harry Paragon, to whom she courtesied mechanically ; for though she had recovered her sight, she neither saw, nor heard any person but the Marquis.

At dinner, placed next to him, her composure gradually returned ; and she had leisure to view the two other young men.

men.—Lord Fontelieu was rather well-looking; resembled his mother, but was so shy and grave, that he hardly opened his lips.—Sir Harry was a pink and white man, perpetually on a broad grin to shew his white teeth; with a little squeaking voice, he went on rattling, saying mere nothings. He seemed, however, not to display his fancied attractions in vain; for Lady Elizabeth's glassy eyes were rivetted upon him, and she was herself unusually talkative.

Emma soon learned, that Sir Harry had other recommendations, besides those he evidently valued himself upon; for he had a very large fortune.—This she saw, would, in Lady Elizabeth's opinion, be an equivalent for a title, for which, till now, she had languished. She had, indeed, long thought herself extremely ill-used, that no proposal had ever yet been made to her.

This had soured her temper, never very sweet, and rendered her so impracticable, that her mother daily more and more regretted the loss of Lady Bell, who, with all her faults, could be extremely agreeable and easy to live with.

This, too, had strengthened her partiality for Emma, who was always as attentive to her, as if she had been her child; and often, when vexed by the giddy flights of one daughter, or the ill-humour of the other, Lady Wilmington had found consolation in her.

Lord Miramont, at dinner, and during the evening, divided his attention between his aunt and Emma: he seemed so unfeignedly happy, that the latter was come to pass some time under the same roof as himself; shewed such eagerness to converse with her, that Emma's own satisfaction was greatly increased: yet she could not help regretting, that Lady Bell,
 who

who used to be the life and spirit of the house, was no longer there, and that she should never even hear her name mentioned.

She durst not enquire after her of the ladies; but this reserve was unnecessary with the Marquis. He said, she had left Scarborough, whither, as he had before told Emma, she went immediately after marriage, and was then at Brighthelmstone; "but," added he, "I intend to talk to Fontelieu about her; he has an estate independent of his father; is generous, loves his sister, and, I dare say, may be prevailed upon to allow her something; for, till she is of age, she has not a fixpence; then she will have 20,000*l.*, and after her father's death, nearly as much more.—Her grandmother left her the above-mentioned fortune, which I apprehend was the bait that caught Darnford.—She is a wild, inconsiderate, but sweet pretty creature, and I certainly

ought not to abuse her, who am not a very steady character myself."

Emma rejoiced in his intended application to Lord Fontelieu; for, by what she gathered of the situation of Lady Bell, she apprehended her circumstances were very narrow, and always precarious; as Darnford passed his whole time in gaming.

When Emma was retired to her chamber at night, and reflected on the agreeable presentiments that had filled her breast in the morning, she could hardly persuade herself, on finding them so speedily realized, that she was not in a dream: but, upon coolly reviewing all that had passed, she felt the delightful consciousness, that she was now actually in the same house with Lord Miramont, and should be so for many days to come.

Now, therefore, or never, could she hope to learn the real state of his sentiments
in

in regard to her; and she resolved, if the event of this meeting, should not be a clear and satisfactory explanation of them, to follow her father's advice, and obliterate the Marquis from her thoughts.

A fortnight now passed rapidly on, and if she could have forgotten some family chagrins, she would have been almost completely happy.—The distribution of her time exactly suited her inclinations. As she rose early in the morning, she contrived to have a couple of hours to employ with her pen, or her books, before the family was stirring.—As soon as breakfast was over, every fine day, Lord Fontelieu took his mother an airing in his curricule; and she and Lady Elizabeth rode on horseback, attended by Lord Miramont, and Sir Harry Paragon.—They soon divided into parties, when the former always kept close by her side: the weather, in general, was so favourable to these excursions, that they often ex-

tended them to a great distance from home, and returned at a late hour, so as only just to have time to dress for dinner.

The early part of the evening was spent in music; the Countess, formerly, when there was a possibility of a competition between Lady Bell and her in talents, never asked her to play or sing; but, as Lady Elizabeth could do neither, she was now extremely glad to hear her do both. —Emma, therefore, played upon the piano forte, accompanied by Lord Fontelieu on the violin; and frequently sung with Lord Miramont and Sir Harry a *trio*, or a *duo* with his Lordship, which she certainly preferred.

Cards afterwards succeeded, in which the Countess, her daughter, and the gentlemen engaged; as, likewise, any chance visitors, which were not many, for the Earl being absent, Lady Wilmington announced,

nounced, on her arrival in the country, that she did not mean to see company in general, but only a very few people, with whom she was not on a formal footing.

Whenever Lord Miramont could escape from the card table, he seated himself by Emma's frame, in which she was working chairs for the Countess.—The conversation on these occasions, was to her very interesting; not that Lord Miramont had any particular talent in that way, though he was naturally lively, but he had always something to communicate; something about which he wished to consult her; seeking to penetrate her sentiments on every subject, and seeming anxious to be guided by her taste, in a thousand articles relative to his own concerns. But amid all this confidential intercourse, never a word escaped him that sounded like love.

Yet gradually she perceived a considerable change in his humour ; it was not half so light and gay as when first she arrived at Wilmington ; but though far from melancholy, it was certainly pensive. Often he was so absent, that he knew not what was passing ; and then he would fix his eyes instantly upon her, till her embarrassment warned him to withdraw them.

Insensibly his manner towards her became more tender ; if, accidentally, during their rides, her horse gave a start, he was instantly alarmed ; sometimes in bad roads, he would insist upon leading it himself, not trusting to the care of the groom ; if she looked pale, or had the slightest complaint, he could not conceal his uneasiness ; and if ever she absented herself from the company for any time, his eyes sparkled with joy when she returned, and he gently reproached her for having stayed away.

Lady

Lady Wilmington, whose whole stock of maternal love had formerly been engrossed by her youngest daughter, and who had always shewn less partiality to Lord Fontelieu, when he was a boy, than is common with mothers to an only son, was not prepared to meet him on his return to England, after an absence of some years, with any warmth of affection; but, finding him, in every respect, very different from what she had imagined, she almost immediately became fond, as well as proud of him.

Disappointed in her favourite child; indifferent to Lady Elizabeth; and almost hating her Lord; she had felt a sad vacancy in her heart, which she now thought might be filled by a son, whose profound respect, and delicate attentions, soothed her domestic chagrins, and gratified her pride.

Scarcely

Scarcely had he arrived, than she repented of the invitation she had sent to Emma, before she knew that Lord Fontelieu was coming, for fear that he might be captivated by her beauty and accomplishments, and she had almost resolved to put her off;—when it occurred to her that Lady Elizabeth, constantly in the society of young men, would be awkwardly situated, without some companion of her own sex and age.

Lady Wilmington could not endure those she called the *native Misses*, to which Emma alone was an exception; and, considering that it would always be in her power to send her away, if she saw the least symptom of a dawning partiality towards her in her son, she adhered to her engagement.

A few days were sufficient perfectly to tranquilize her mind in this respect; for Lord Fontelieu, who was extremely
well,

well bred, behaved to Emma with that formal sort of civility which denotes absolute indifference.

Emma, therefore, was considered by her, as an exceeding agreeable addition to her family; and almost as one that was indispensable, under the present circumstances.

But Lady Wilmington had too much penetration, as well as experience, not to perceive the predilection of her nephew to this lovely girl: this, however, gave her little concern on his account; for, prepossessed with the belief that he still wore Lady Fredville's chains, and that he had no inclination to marry, she viewed his behaviour in no other light than as a flirtation *sans consequence*, which he would forget as soon as he left the country.

Yet,

Yet, as her heart was not bad, she sometimes questioned herself, whether she was not acting cruelly by Emma, in suffering her, to be constantly exposed to the seduction, of so fascinating a man as Lord Miramont? But her knowledge of Emma's virtuous principles re-assured her, against any apprehensions of other danger, than *that* which threatened her heart, which, if it should receive a slight wound, she relied on her good sense to heal; as, likewise, that *this* would prevent her entertaining an idea so very absurd, in Lady Wilmington's opinion, as of Lord Miramont's ever thinking of her as a wife.

Lady Elizabeth, to whom Emma had sometimes been an object of indifference, and sometimes of envy and jealousy, now courted her extremely; not that her sentiments towards her were more cordial, or benign than formerly; but her presence was useful, and her talents were agreeable.

agreeable. The young men, who were all musical, could not do without her in their little concerts (Lady Elizabeth herself having entirely given up music); and they might find Wilmington very dull, if she was no longer there. The possibility of Sir Harry's departure, before he had made the much-desired proposal, made her tremble; therefore, whenever her mother, annoyed by scruples, hinted the propriety of sending Emma back to Downton, Lady Elizabeth vehemently opposed it; and reminded her, that she had promised to celebrate her brother's return home by a ball, at which Emma positively must be present.

Lady Wilmington, perhaps, might not have paid much attention to the wishes of her daughter, if the latter had not artfully engaged Lord Fontelieu to support them; and if she had not had many reasons, herself, for liking the company of Emma. She, therefore, no longer talked of
of

of parting with her; and, to induce Mrs. Mourtray to acquiesce cheerfully with her absence, she took Emma with her, to pay a morning visit at Downton; when Mrs. Mourtray, who continued highly delighted with her own little *coterie*, willingly consented, that her daughter should pass another fortnight at Wilmington.

In regard to the ball, the Countess, not choosing to be at the expence of giving one in the same style as those of the preceding year, she compromised the matter with Lady Elizabeth, by settling to have two or three little dances, confined to a small number of persons, without form or ceremony, which perfectly satisfied her, and pleased all the party extremely.

Lord Miramont, though he affected, in town, to be in general averse from dancing, was now one of the most indefatigable of dancers, and never failed to
engage

engage Emma for his partner; which he could do without, in the least, affronting his cousin, as she was extremely glad to be left at liberty to dance with Sir Harry.

He, however, seldom ventured to engage in more than two dances, for fear of fatiguing his delicate person, ever the first object of his attention; but, as he would afterwards lounge upon a sofa, with Lady Elizabeth, the rest of the evening, she was indifferent how little he danced.

A decided flirtation was now established between this pair, which all her family sedulously encouraged. Indeed, Lord Fontelieu, whose manly character despised such a little effeminate being, would not have been troubled with his company in travelling to England, but with the hope, that he might bring about a match between him and his sister; who, he heard, had been so unfortunate in her endeavours

vours to get a husband, that she would probably rejoice to accept of Sir Harry Paragon, with his immense income:—a man as free from vice as from virtue, but who was, in many respects, completely ridiculous.

CHAP. IX.

ONE evening, after Emma had been engaged in a very long conversation with Lord Miramont, during which the words, *I love*, seemed to hover on his lips, though an unaccountable *something* seemed always to prevent their getting further, she felt her spirits so much agitated, that, when she retired to her room after supper, she could not bring herself to go to bed.

To calm this perturbation, she had recourse to a book; and she had read two hours, when, rising to undress, she observed an extraordinary light, in a window opposite to her chamber, which she knew belonged to Lord Miramont's apartment.

The old mansion, at Wilmington, was built in a quadrangular form: the whole
of

of the South front was appropriated to the family ; all their windows faced the lawn ; and, over their rooms, the servants, immediately about their persons, also were lodged : the rest in a building detached from the house. The apartments to the North, facing a long avenue, were seldom used, excepting when the house was very full of company, the furniture of these being quite in the old-fashioned style, and much the worse for wear.— The Eastern apartments were, in general, allotted to male guests ; and these looked into a spacious court, as did those opposite to them, where there were several handsome and commodious bed-chambers and dressing-rooms : here Emma was lodged ; and adjoining to her's was a small room, occupied by an old house-keeper, who was laid up with the rheumatism ; and, excepting her, there was not a creature else in that quarter.

A long

A long gallery, beginning from the Southern side of the quadrangle, extended all along three sides of it; but owing to a whim of Lady Wilmington's, who had the door bricked up on the West, because it was near her dressing-room, there was no communication between the quarter she inhabited, and that in the occupation of Emma, unless by traversing the whole extent of the gallery.

Emma seeing this extraordinary light proceed from Lord Miramont's chamber, which increased prodigiously as she stood watching it, was convinced the room must be on fire; for, a very little while before this glare of light struck her, that whole quarter of the quadrangle had been involved in entire darkness.

Terrified to death, and well aware, from the arrangement of the family, that no mortal, save the old helpless housekeeper, could hear her, if she rang the bell, she
flew

flew precipitately along the gallery, screaming out, "Fire, fire!"—the smell of this, as she advanced, too well confirming her fears.

A dead silence, however, continued: she only heard the echo of her own voice; and, puzzled to know which of the doors she saw, belonged to Lord Miramont's chamber, she knocked indiscriminately at all; but still nobody heard her. She redoubled her cries as her alarm increased, till a little squeaking voice, which she knew to be Sir Harry's, exclaimed, "Lard! Lard! what's the matter?"

"O! the house is on fire!" replied she:—"Ah! Lord Miramont! which is his room?"

"O! shocking! horrible!" cried Sir Harry:—"I shall either catch my death of cold, or be burned in my bed."

Emma,

Emma, regardless of him, continued vociferating, "fire!" with all her might, and thumping violently at a door, which she discovered, by the light through the key-hole, to be that of the room (doubtless Lord Miramont's) where the fire blazed; then, redoubling her cries at the door of the Baronet, she conjured him to rise, and hasten to her assistance.

With horror, indescribable, she recollected to have heard the Marquis say, that, during his first sleep, the noise of a cannon would scarcely rouse him. What then was to be done?—for all her efforts, hitherto, to wake him had been ineffectual. Sick at heart, she exclaimed, "O! my God!—he will be burned!—there is no possibility of saving him!"

She would have opened the door, but she had the presence of mind to refrain, for fear the sudden entrance of air from without, might make the flames rage fiercer within.

At length, just as she was hurrying, half frantic, towards Lady Wilmington's quarter of the house, Sir Harry appeared in the gallery, with a poker in his hand; and now he added his efforts to her's, to awaken Lord Miramont; but no sooner did the Baronet see the light of the flames under the door, than his alarm for himself induced him to run off, as fast as his slender legs could carry him: at that instant, however, the light, falling full on Lord Miramont's eyes, awoke him, and he returned some confused answer, to Emma's loud exhortations to him to arise; whilst, to her unspeakable delight, she heard him moving out of bed.

She now retreated, in all haste, that he might, without indelicacy, quit his room directly; and away she flew in quest of the servants. Sir Harry, in the mean while, had run to their rooms, and giving them the alarm, it soon became general. Emma met some rushing towards the gallery, whilst others hastened to work the

the fire engine ; which, being near at hand, gave hopes that the flames would soon be extinguished.

By this time Lady Wilmington and Lady Elizabeth were roused, and they hurried down stairs. Emma, too, being easy about Lord Miramont, whose voice she heard giving directions to the servants, joined them.

In a short time, an account was brought that the fire was put out, after destroying no more than the furniture of Lord Miramont's chamber, and an adjoining closet ; the great thickness of the walls, having prevented its spreading further.

During the bustle and confusion of this scene, an uninterested spectator might have found cause for laughter, in the ridiculous *costume* some of the family exhibited, though terror made them wholly unconscious of it.

The Countess, who never appeared at any time, till she was dressed with the utmost precision, retained her usual dignified air in her night-cap; in other respects, she and her daughter were very lightly clad, only the latter had taken care of her shoulders, having wrapped a flannel petticoat round them.

Emma alone, who had never undressed, appeared as usual.

But the most unhappy object in appearance, was Sir Harry Paragon; he sat shivering in a corner, dreading that formidable *catch-cold* which was seldom out of his thoughts:—his teeth were in a chatter; the pretty pink bloom of his cheeks was totally gone, and, what could be less easily accounted for, his dark eyebrows. His chintz night-gown lined with rose-coloured farfenet, now, alas! afforded him little comfort, for it was very ineffectual

fectual, to keep the cold from his tender limbs.

His apprehensions of some terrible mischief to his health, in consequence of being forced to rise (as he said) when in a state of perspiration, made him break out into the most doleful lamentations: and much as Lady Wilmington wished to court him, she could hardly hear with patience, the concern he expressed for himself, while he shewed none for an accident, which might have been fatal to the whole family.

Lord Miramont, wrapped up in a great coat, with a handkerchief bound round his hand, which was a little burned, only made his appearance for a minute, before the fire was extinguished; hastening to the assistance of his cousin, who usefully employed all his activity and intelligence, to get it under.

The fire had been occasioned by the carelessness of Lord Miramont's servant, who had left a candle burning on a table in the dressing-closet, within his lord's chamber.

All danger being now over, and another chamber being prepared for the Marquis, every body retired to rest: Emma devoutly thanking the Almighty, for having made her the instrument, of saving her beloved Lord Miramont, from inevitable destruction.

After a night of such alarm, it may easily be imagined the company did not assemble till very late the next day. As Emma was crossing the hall, Lord Miramont appeared at an opposite door; he instantly flew to her, and catching her in his arms,—“Charming preserver of my life,” cried he, “excellent creature!—here let me swear to you eternal love!”

Emma,

Emma, blushing and amazed, gently disengaged herself from his hold; but he seized her hand, which he repeatedly kissed in despite of her resistance. "Forgive this freedom, sweet Emma," continued he, "but I can no longer restrain my feelings;—my full heart will burst, if not relieved. Oh, I must and will tell you, that I love—that I idolize—that I adore you!"

Whatever Emma felt at this moment, she was not able, at least, to stammer out more than a few words, expressing the satisfaction it would have given her, to be of use to him; and as she spoke, her face was crimsoned over with vermillion.

"Oh, I have things innumerable to say to you," cried he; "but I hear voices;—I must have leisure to open my whole heart to you, sweet Emma: to-night, therefore, when the card party is begun, I will..."

A footman coming by, stopped the end of his sentence, and Emma, all in a tremor, hardly knowing what she did, made the best of her way to the breakfast-room, whither he followed her in a few minutes.

Only the Countess and her daughter were there; but Lord Fontelieu soon joined them: and after the first salutations and mutual congratulations on their late escape had passed, Lady Wilmington, observing she did not see Sir Harry, ordered a servant to go and tell him breakfast was ready.

The servant returned with Sir Harry Paragon's respects, and that he chose to take his breakfast in bed. The terror, fatigues, and cold of the past night, having greatly (as he said) disordered him.

"Poor creature!" said Lord Miramont, "he really ought to be kept in a box stuffed with cotton; and then, Elizabeth, you

you might divide your attention between him and your dormouse,—fit companions for each other.”

“ Indeed, cousin, it is monstrous cruel of you,” cried she, angrily, “ to joke in this manner ; I wish you would mind your own business. As for Sir Harry, he is much to be pitied for the extreme delicacy of his constitution ; but, because you are as strong as a horse yourself, you never feel for others.”

“ I am sure,” replied he, “ Sir Harry dispenses every body else from this care in regard to him, his only solicitude being for himself. Last night, during our alarm, the possibility of catching cold, and that there was a chance of his travelling *necessaire*, and all the apparatus of his toilet, being burned, engaged his most anxious thoughts.”

I 5 Lady

Lady Wilmington, desirous to turn off this conversation, started another subject. She mentioned, with great encomiums, the presence of mind and persevering zeal Emma had shewn, at a time when most young people would have been rendered inactive by terror.—“I do believe,” cried she, “this house, strong as it is, would have suffered considerably, but for Miss Mourtray’s courage and vigilance: and you, Miramont, certainly owe your life to her.”

“I well know it,” replied he, “and never—never shall I forget it.—What I feel on the occasion, I have, in part, endeavoured to express already to Miss Mourtray; but what I have yet forborne to say,” added he, with a significant glance at Emma, “her intelligent mind cannot fail of comprehending.”

“Umph!—it is very proper,” said Lady Wilmington, “that you should feel grateful;

grateful; but you cannot doubt that Miss Mourtray's humanity would have been equally active in regard to any body else."

"Perhaps not *equally* active," thought Emma.

Lady Elizabeth, who owed Lord Miramont a grudge for having ridiculed the effeminacy of her lover, meditated giving him a side-stroke; so, turning to Emma, she said, "There is one thing I should like to know; and I wonder it did not strike every body last night as very odd!-- How came it to pass, Miss Mourtray, that you were then completely dressed?"

"I had not been in bed, Madam, and was on the point of undressing when I saw an unusual light in the window opposite to mine."

"Why did you sit up so late?"

"I was reading, Madam."

"How romantic and pretty!—and, then, to crown all, an adventure!"

"Fie, fie, Elizabeth!" said Lady Wilmington, gravely; "what you are pleased to call an adventure, and mention as if it had been an agreeable circumstance, might have been a most tragical catastrophe."

"Poor Elizabeth!" said Lord Miramont, ironically smiling, "let me recommend to you, to go and look after your little dormouse—all in good time, I hope you will have the large one as snugly in your possession."

Lady Elizabeth, with her cheeks paler than usual with rage, flounced out of the room, saying, she did not understand him.

Late

Late in the evening Sir Harry ventured to emerge from his retreat: his face was restored to its wonted appearance; but his person was closely buttoned up in a pea-green silk *pelisse*, lined with fable.—The sight of him chased away part of Lady Elizabeth's ill humour.

Mean while Emma, little heeding what was passing, impatiently longed for the entrance of the card-table, as the time was approaching, which promised to be decisive of her fate. The whole day she had thought of nothing but the declaration, so long wished for, that the Marquis had made in the morning.

The evening, however, wore away; cards were not named; for the event of the preceding night seemed to have unhinged all the company: none of their minds were tuned to harmony; music, therefore, was not proposed.

But

But, at last, Lady Wilmington began to arrange her card party, when Emma trembled for fear Lord Miramont should not be able to excuse himself from playing.

Fortunately, Lady Wilmington had not forgotten the late sparring scene between him and her daughter; and, to prevent any renewal of this, she purposely left him out, taking Lord Fontelieu for her own partner, and leaving Lady Elizabeth to Sir Harry.

As soon as the rubber was begun, Lord Miramont joined Emma, who, as usual, sat working at her frame, near one of the chimnies, far removed from the card-table, which was close to the other: and the drawing-room being sixty feet long, little apprehension could be entertained, that their conversation should be overheard.

No

No sooner had Lord Miramont taken a seat by her side, than he said, in a low voice, "I have so much to say—so much to explain, my dear Miss Mourtray, that I tremble, lest you should not have patience to attend to me."

"No great fear of that," thought Emma; but she kept silent, and he proceeded.

"You little suspect how long I have loved you; for, till lately, I will honestly own, I tried to suppress my inclination. But, almost from the beginning of our acquaintance, I felt attracted towards you, by an impulse difficult to resist; yet certain reasons, added to a foolish prejudice I had imbibed against matrimony, determined me to smother this growing passion, so incompatible with my habits of life, and . . ."

Lord

Lord Miramont paused; he seemed embarrassed: but soon recovering himself, "I know not why," continued he, "I should give you a detail of the progress of my sentiments; therefore I will cut it short, and only add, that I was very near discovering them to you, during our last interview at my aunt's, in town. For when I heard you were going into the country, I could scarcely forbear throwing myself at your feet, and conjure you to stay,—and stay for my sake: but, at that instant, a most cruel recollection sealed my lips.—You departed, and I became miserable.—I felt like one of those wretched ghosts described in poetry, wandering about in despair, because their bodies had not yet received the sepulchral rites.—Nothing pleased—nothing amused me..."

Here Emma raised her eyes towards him; those beautiful eyes, so expressive of her thoughts. He seemed to understand their language, for he repeated, with

with energy—"Nothing, upon my honour! In this comfortless state I remained, till Fontelieu arrived from abroad, and asked me to come hither.

"After all I have said, I need not tell you, with what joy I accepted an invitation, which would give me an opportunity of seeing you. I came, however, without any fixed project how I should act: but how could I dwell under the same roof with you, and remain undecided? In short, each day, each hour, you became dearer to me; I found I could no longer live without you; and yet I had a reason why I wished to defer explaining myself: but the kind interest you took in my preservation, entirely threw me off my guard, and I could no longer retain a secret, which, a thousand times before, had been on the point of escaping.—Now, if I may presume to think I am not indifferent to you; if you will encourage me to hope . . . Ah! speak
my

my beloved Emma!—give me but a look!
—one look”

Emma timidly raised her blushing face, but she could not speak.

He proceeded:—“I know not how I am to interpret your silence, for your eyes are averted from me. Having now explained my sentiments, judge how mortifying it is to me to be forced to add” His voice faltered; he seemed extremely agitated; whilst she, with mingled alarm and amazement, scarcely ventured to breathe, for fear of losing a word of what was to follow.

“That there is an impediment,” continued he; “a fatal obstacle which prevents me, at present, from daring to solicit the honour of your hand; but”

“Then

"Then why, my Lord," interrupted Emma, eagerly; "why, then, hold this improper language to me?"

"Have patience, I conjure you, dearest Miss Mourtray: the obstacle I allude to is not insurmountable; it must and shall be conquered; though, I fear, this will not be done without great difficulty.—Would to Heaven I could, with honour, develope to you this mystery!—But wrong me not, I beg, nor yet yourself, by supposing that I should presume to address you, if my views were not strictly honourable. Allow me but to hope, that when no obstacle exists, you will be mine!—Let me but feel secure of your heart, and then I shall proceed with alacrity, and either I will die, or be your's. Speak, therefore, my dearest Emma!—let me hear what I have to depend upon."

During the beginning of this conversation, Emma could scarcely conceal the
delightful

delightful sensations that arose in her mind; but gradually they faded away, to make room for distrust, mortification, and anger. She thought the Marquis trifled with her: if he was not engaged to another, what obstacle could there be to his marrying? She said, therefore, with an offended air, "What can I say, Lord Miramont; what can you expect from me? Surely, not to listen to this ambiguous language?"

"Good God!—have you a doubt of my honour? If I were free, I would this moment kneel at your feet, and never rise, till I had engaged your promise to be irrevocably mine."

"But, since you say you are not free, Lord Miramont, it ill becomes you to continue this subject; and I positively decline hearing any more on it."

Emma

Emma now made a motion to rise, but he detained her:—"Oh! Heaven!" exclaimed he; "how coldly, how cruelly you speak!—you know not the torture you inflict. Ah! wherefore did you save my life last night, if that life is of no value to you?"

The violence of his emotion alarmed her: she apprehended the card party heard his words; and, summoning courage to speak ingenuously, she said, in a low and softened voice, "your life, certainly, is of no small value to all who know you; but, as your Lordship's situation appears involved in unaccountable obscurity, you must excuse my refusing to engage my affections, while there is a doubt of your being at liberty to solicit them."

"Gracious Powers!" exclaimed he, "what can I say to convince you of the purity of my love? I acknowledge, it
would

would have been more respectful, had I delayed avowing it, till I had removed the obstacle to my wishes: this was my fixed resolve; and, I solemnly protest, I should have adhered to it, had I not met you this morning; when my heart, glowing with tenderness and gratitude, could contain itself no longer. But, for God's sake, my beloved Emma, judge of me with your wonted candour and generosity, and rather pity than blame me.— Reserve, I implore you, that heart, so inexpressibly dear to me, till I am at liberty to claim it.—Oh! then, how happy I shall be!”

Emma, however, though it cost her a severe pang, had the resolution to remain silent; and, rising, she approached the card table, where, sitting down by Lady Wilmington, she continued till supper.

Never did a countenance exhibit stronger marks of vexation and disappointment

pointment than did that of the Marquis. Emma saw it but too clearly: she herself felt miserable and uncomfortable beyond expression; yet, amid the gloom of her thoughts, self-approbation diffused one consoling ray: "Just so," said she, mentally, "would my father have counselled me to act. However weak I feel, still I have not betrayed the tenderness of my heart to a man, who avowed that he was not free to sue for it. Had I done this, then, indeed, I should have been despicable to myself!"

Lady Wilmington was too acute an observer, not to perceive that something extraordinary had passed between her nephew and her guest; but she prudently forbore to notice it.

But Sir Harry Haragon, in his little squeaking voice, exclaimed, "*Mais mon Dieu!*—what ails you both?—have you made a vow of silence?"

"Miss

"Miss Mourtray," said Lady Elizabeth, taking upon herself to answer for her, "feels the effects of her terrible alarm last night, and Lord Miramont the *contre coup*."

"It is not at all surprizing," said Lord Fontelieu, in his usual grave manner, "that any of us should look ill and jaded, after our late disturbance ; therefore, if I might presume to advise, we should all retire early to-night."

This motion met with general approbation, and was adopted. During the whole night, however, Emma found it impossible to close her eyes. So disagreeable and unexpected a termination of all the fond hopes she had cherished so long, and thought so near being realized, filled her with anguish and disappointment.— In vain she racked her brains, to form some guess, what this impediment might be, which had thus started up, and which

Lord

Lord Miramont said honour forbade him to explain. That Lady Fredville was, in some manner, implicated in this, she had no doubt; but *how*, as she was a married woman, she could not conceive.

CHAP. X.

WHILE one event had rapidly been following in succession to another, at Wilmington, a plan had been arranging, at Downton, extremely agreeable to Mrs. Mourtray.

The month of October, which had begun so fine, was now ending very indifferently, and the cold weather brought on a return of her complaint in her hip: the Colonel, too, was seized with the gout; and, as these invalids could no longer meet, grievous lamentations echoed through the houses of each. No mitigation could be procured for their sufferings, till Miss Thornley, whose thoughts, ever employed for the benefit of others, suggested to them the idea of going to Bath, for a month or six weeks. Both

approved

approved the plan ; but neither possessed the means of executing it.

But this difficulty she was prepared to remove ; for having been for some time hoarding, out of her little fortune, what she thought would be sufficient to surprise her brother and sister, some day, with the present of a second-hand post-chaise, she naturally offered them this money, as if it had been their due, to defray the extraordinary expenses of a Bath expedition.

Without the slightest scruple they consented to avail themselves of her generosity, provided she would prevail upon their friend, Mrs. Mourtray, to be of the party ; when, if Miss Thornley would pay the house-rent, they agreed the two families should club together for their maintenance.

No persuasions were necessary to induce Mrs. Mourtray to assent to this proposal: the state of her health, alone, she thought justified her acceptance of it; but she was somewhat embarrassed what to do concerning her daughter, as she had just consented that she should prolong her visit to Lady Wilmington, though she began (especially since she had been indisposed) to be very anxious for her company.

This Miss Thornley thought perfectly natural, and that it would be a thousand pities, not to give this beautiful girl an opportunity of seeing, and being seen, in so gay a place as Bath; whither, she supposed, she would infinitely prefer going, than to remain in ——shire; and Mrs. Mourtray was of the same opinion.

This whole scheme was no sooner settled by these Ladies than Peter was dispatched to Wilmington. Early in the morning,

morning, therefore, after Emma had passed (as before mentioned) a most wretched night, she received a note from her mother, desiring her, with proper apologies to Lady Wilmington, to come home the day following, as she had resolved that they should accompany the Thornleys to Bath, where a house already was taken for their reception.

That the hopes of giving her a little amusement, had partly determined her to remove thither, besides thinking that the waters might do her good, as she had a flying gout about her; and, as she purposed setting out on her journey the end of the week, she wished to have Emma at Downton to prepare for it.

The vexation Emma felt before, was not a little heightened by the contents of this note. She was not only, in the most critical moment of her life, to leave the Marquis in distress and unhappy; but

also to go, at a time when she was not perfectly satisfied with him, and with her mind perplexed and uneasy, to Bath; to mix in frivolous amusements!

Obedience, however, to her mother seemed to her indispensable; and, conformably to this, she answered her note. — With a heavy heart she went down to breakfast, at which the gentlemen did not appear; for as the day was too bad for the ladies to take their usual exercise out of doors, the former went out a shooting, Sir Harry excepted, who preferred remaining all the morning in his bed.

Emma now informed Lady Wilming-
ton, of the summons she had received to
return to Downton; and not daring to
speak much, lest she should burst into
tears, she gave her Ladyship her mother's
note to read.

The

The Countess, as she returned it, only said, "Very well; you shall have the carriage."

She was not, however, so indifferent in this matter as she appeared; for the fire scene, and some glances she had cast on her nephew and Emma during the interesting scene, by the tent stitch frame, had as clearly developed to her what was going on, as if she had heard the whole; though she could not at all account, for the melancholy looks of the lovers at supper.

This morning she had already been ruminating, on what pretext she should send Emma away; when, to her agreeable surprise, she found herself relieved from further solicitude.

But Lady Elizabeth, who had not been quite out of her sulky fit, immediately assumed apparent good humour, for again

all the inconveniencies of Emma's departure struck her forcibly; so, with affected sweetness, she said, "Must you, indeed, go, dear Emma? Is it absolutely necessary you should accompany Mrs. Mourtray to Bath?"

"Certainly," said Lady Wilmington, sternly: "do you suppose Miss Mourtray would let her mother, who is sick, go without her?"

"Why, I thought these Thornleys were going with her."

"You thought, indeed! Pray, keep your thoughts to yourself."

Poor Emma sat confounded at the behaviour of the Countess, but spoke not.

The dinner being on the table before the sportsmen appeared, Emma never exchanged a word with the Marquis; but
while

while they were at table, Lady Wilmington mentioned, as if by accident, Emma's approaching departure; Lord Miramont was at that instant taking a glass of wine from a servant, but he spilled half of it over the cloth, and his face became as pale as death.

"Lard! lard!" cried Sir Harry, "how nervous shooting makes people! Will you smell my *Eau de Cologne*?"

"What the devil do you mean?" cried Lord Miramont in a rage, vexed that his confusion should be noticed."

"Me! nothing at all, I am sure," answered the Baronet, alarmed.—Silence then ensued; but Lord Miramont could not swallow another mouthful."

Emma, whose agitation was little inferior to his, tried in vain to hem away a rising sigh, and to affect a shew of cheerfulness;

fulness; but the effort was beyond her strength, and the moment the company rose from the table, she hastened to her chamber; where a shower of tears relieved and enabled her, in the evening, to appear in the drawing-room, with tolerable composure.

As soon as tea was over, the Countess pressed her to sing. Ill as her spirits were attuned to harmony, politeness, and the fear of disobliging, induced her to comply.

The long drawing-room, where Lady Wilmington and her company sat every evening, opened, by large folding doors in its centre, into a circular music room; but Lady Wilmington never in cold weather, left her station by the fire-side in the great room, where she could hear the music as well, as in that where it was performed.

This

This evening she sat down to cards earlier than usual, again leaving her nephew out of her party ; and Emma, having finished singing, was gathering together her music books, when Lord Miramont, who alone remained in the room, pressed her to sing with him a charming duo of Jackson's, with words borrowed, in part, from a little piece called *The Change*, in Cowley's *Mistress*.

“ Love in thy eyes for ever plays,
 He in thy snowy bosom strays,
 He makes thy rosy lips his care,
 And walks the mazes of thy hair.
 Love dwells in ev'ry outward part,
 But, ah! he never touch'd thy heart !
 How diff'rent is my fate from thine ;—
 No outward marks of love are mine !
 My brow is clouded by despair,
 And Grief, Love's bitter foe, is there:
 But, deep within my glowing soul,
 He reigns and rules without controul.”

Emma could scarcely restrain her emotion whilst she sung ; conscious, that her

voice, did not accord more perfectly with that of Lord Miramont (full of the tenderest expression), than did her heart.

When the duo ceased, he said, with a mournful air, "How admirably do these words express our situation relative to each other!—*But, ah! he never touch'd thy heart!*—No, no; such happiness is not mine; or else, Emma, you would not depart and leave me in despair!"

Emma, who could ill contend with her own feelings, which hitherto, with the utmost difficulty, she had concealed, was so overwhelmed by this reproach, that her tears, in despite of herself, stole down her cheeks as she made a motion towards the door.

"What!" cried he, seizing her hand, "you will leave me, then! Nothing I can say has power to move you!"

"Why,

"Why, why do you say this, Lord Miramont?" said she, weeping, and holding her hand before her eyes: "why distress me thus? But let me go, I entreat."

"Say, then, one kind word—Oh! my Emma, speak to me—save me from distraction!"

"What can I say?—You know I go to-morrow, because I must obey my mother; but, be satisfied, my best wishes will remain with you—If they can make you happy!—Oh! then—."

She could not proceed—"Do you, indeed, wish me happy?" said Lord Miramont, pressing her hand to his lips: "confess, then, do, my beloved Emma, that I am dear to you!"

She spoke not, but her increased emotion encouraged him to exclaim—"You
love

love me : yes, I am sure you love me—your own sensibility betrays, what your cold prudence wishes to conceal.”

Emma, too sensible of the truth of this, did not attempt to deny it. “My reserve,” said she, “you would have had no cause to complain of, but for your extraordinary communication last night: nay, God knows, whether I am not committing a sin, even to listen to you, ignorant as I am—.”

“No, upon my honour,” interrupted he, “you commit none; the barrier is one that can, and shall be removed.”

“Well, then, as we are now going to part,” continued she, “I will fairly tell you, that if my heart must not be your’s, it shall never belong to any other.—This declaration, must convince you what my sentiments are; and now forbear to mention

tion this subject any more; unless that moment arrives, when you can assure me that you are free."

"And that moment shall speedily arrive, I swear, by Heaven.—I will go to town immediately, and never attempt to see you again, till I can openly, my sweet Emma, declare to the whole world, that I adore you.—But do not be offended, while any incertitude exists, as to the success of my undertaking, if I request you to keep an inviolable secrecy, as to what has passed between us.—Believe me, this is of the utmost importance to secure *my*, let me be so vain to say *our*, happiness. Much adroitness will be necessary, and the least suspicion, at present, of my view, would infallibly frustrate its success."

"I shall certainly avoid mentioning circumstances so singular," answered she,

"excepting

"excepting to my mother; with her I can have no reserve."

"Then you will undo me!" cried he warmly; "for though I esteem and respect Mrs. Mourtray, as your mother; I cannot consent to trust her in this instance."

"I detest mystery," said Emma; "it would be unpardonable in me to practice it towards her."

"Oh, no; indeed you mistake: consider, that if one inadvertent word might ruin all my hopes of happiness, what you risk? Let me, then, beseech you, my dearest Emma, to be silent, till you hear from me.—Be persuaded, I shall never rest a moment, till I am able to explain my intentions clearly: what difference, then, can it make, whether she hears of this affair, a little sooner or later?"

Emma,

Emma, though far from being convinced by Lord Miramont's reasons, reluctantly (as he continued to urge it) gave the promise he desired.—And now she had gone too far, to be either able, or perhaps willing, to disguise from him, any part of her sentiments.

To restrain, in some degree, his rapturous behaviour, she returned to the drawing-room, and seated herself at her frame; only, however, pretending to work; for insensibly he drew from her a relation, of the rise and progress of a passion, that had so long filled her bosom.

Although this did not inform him of much, that he had not before surmised, yet it gave him inconceivable delight.—Reciprocal assurances of unalterable affection passed between them, and they did not separate, 'till the supper was announced, when he softly whispered, at parting,

parting—"Be silent, and faithful!—I shall not venture to write to you."

But when she retired for the night, and reviewed the past occurrences, she regretted, that she had so speedily retracted, the prudent resolves she had made in a calmer moment. She blamed herself, for having been so explicit with a man, who, if his conduct had been correct, could have had nothing to conceal. "Alas!" said she, "if my father had witnessed my imprudence, how much he would have been hurt!"—The rash promise, too, that Lord Miramont had extorted from her, in regard to her mother, pressed heavily on her spirits.

She scarcely doubted, that Lady Fredville was to be the arbitress of Lord Miramont's fate; and with a sigh she reflected, that if the whole happiness of her life, depended on so artful a person, most
 precarious

precarious, indeed, were her hopes!—Yet, amid these chagrins, she was soothed by the pleasing idea, that Lord Miramont passionately loved her, and was resolutely bent, on conquering every obstacle between them.—Nor can it be doubted, that the inherent failing in her character (vanity) received some gratification, in having atchieved such a conquest; as, likewise, in having triumphed over that rooted dislike to marriage, which he had so often expressed.

The carriage was ordered to be ready immediately after breakfast, which was to convey Emma home. Refreshed by some sleep, she met the party in the breakfast-room with tolerable cheerfulness, as did Lord Miramont, certain that he was beloved.

But Lady Wilmington had assumed one of her most austere looks: this did not, however, discourage her nephew, from

from announcing to her, that he was under the necessity, of going immediately to London.

"So!" cried she, colouring with resentment, "this is a mighty sudden resolution of your Lordship's; did you settle it in the music-room last night?"

"I settled it, Madam!" returned he, coldly: "this morning, having business—."

"Oh! do not trouble yourself with any explanations," interrupted she; "it would, indeed, be too much vanity in us, to suppose that you would stay here, after Miss Mourtray's departure."

Emma coloured deeply; but Lord Miramont, without noticing this cut, set his talents at work, to soothe his aunt into good humour; in which, probably, he would have succeeded, if she had not anew been
ruffled

ruffled by Sir Harry Paragon's declaring, that the country now was become insupportable, the weather being so very damp; protesting, that he lived in constant terror, of its pernicious effects on his constitution; and though he should be in despair to quit the charming society at Wilmington, he apprehended, he should be obliged to tear himself away, to breathe a milder air, more analogous to the extreme delicacy of his *poitrine*.

This speech, crushing at once all the agreeable hopes both mother and daughter had entertained, imprinted an air of mortification on their faces, which they could not disguise. But Lady Elizabeth, addressing the Baronet, said, with a tender languor, "Can you have the heart to leave us, Sir Harry?"

"Indeed, Ma'am," replied he, "I shall leave my heart behind: my person," continued he, surveying himself with complaisance,

plaisance in a glass opposite to him—"my person will be all that will depart."

"Oh! both are so happily adapted to each other," said Lord Miramont, "that it would be barbarous to separate them."

"I perfectly concur in this opinion," said Lady Wilmington, with an approving smile at her nephew.

"Your Lordship is excessively obliging, indeed," said Sir Harry; "and since your Ladyship honours me so far as to wish my stay, I will try and contend a little longer with this inclement weather."

This point settled, the Countess, duly weighing contingencies, thought it as well to part with Emma on civil terms; she therefore expressed the pleasure she had received in her visit, and her regret that it was ended.

Lady

Lady Elizabeth muttered something to the same effect; but, being now secure of Sir Harry's stay, she saw her depart with perfect indifference. Lord Fontelieu was not a man of many words, yet he exerted himself to say a few civil things, and as he handed her to the carriage, the Marquis was prevented from taking further leave of her, than by a tender pressure of her hand.—A few hours afterwards, he also left Wilming-
ton.

Emma found her mother forgetting her complaints, in busily preparing for this delightful jaunt to Bath. Fortunately, she was so much engrossed by her own affairs, that she had not leisure to ask her daughter many questions, concerning what had passed during their separation.

Emma secretly rejoiced at this; nevertheless she repined at the obligation she

she was under, of concealing from her the prospect, which, though she yet saw it only through a mist, dazzled her eyes with its lustre. From all painful restraint she hoped, however, soon to be relieved; having, with the sanguine disposition of youth, dismissed her fears, and cherished a firm belief, that Lord Miramont could not fail of conquering the mysterious obstacle, which, at first, had given her so much alarm.

“ Bless my heart !” cried Mrs. Mourtray, as soon as she, her daughter, and maid were seated in the chaise that was to convey them to Bath---“ Bless my heart, what a memory I have ! I had nearly forgot to tell you, that Lord Clannarmon---.”

“ Who do you say, Mamma ?” interrupted Emma.

“ Why,

"Why, Sydney that was, now Lord Clannarmon. I thought you knew his mother was dead. Well, he called upon me t'other day, and was a good deal disappointed at not seeing you. I assure you, he is much richer than I thought he would be: he has a very handsome fortune. But what do you think he has done?"

"Something good, I dare say," replied Emma.

"Good, indeed!" cried Mrs. Mourtray; "for, not content with dividing, with Fitzaubert, the half of a large sum his mother left, who, it seems, was a great miser, and to her last moment, inflexibly refused to see her eldest son, though Sydney took him to Florence with him; I say, not content with this donation, I understand, from Colonel Thornley, who knows every thing, for Lord Clannarmon did not say a word to me of all

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this, that he means to share his whole income with his brother, who is to live with him, or not, as he chooses."

"Generous, noble-minded man!" exclaimed Emma.

"Ay; all this is mighty well," said Mrs. Mourtray; "but, after all, unnecessary: one half that he has done would have been quite sufficient."

Emma did not choose to controvert her mother's notions on this point; so she asked, if Lord Clannarmon had ever been able, to learn any intelligence of her brother.

"Ah! no!"—answered Mrs. Mourtray, with a sigh:—"God knows what is become of that poor, dear boy!"

A short silence ensued; when, suddenly, Mrs. Mourtray broke it, saying,—

"Do

"Do you know that Lord Clannarmon did not look at all ugly t'other day: I am surprized I ever thought him so!"

Emma smiled, guessing the cause of this revolution in her sentiments; and her mother proceeded developing them.

"The Colonel," said she, "thought him quite well-looking; and he almost persuaded me to detain his Lordship, and send for you home."

"So!" thought Emma; "Chowles used to be the oracle; now it is the Colonel."

Then, addressing her mother, she expressed her thanks and satisfaction, that her good sense had prevented her doing so extraordinary a thing; and, to give a turn to the conversation, she talked of Bath, and its amusements; but she easily

perceived, that Colonel Thornley had infused into her mother's head, a wish of having Lord Clannarmon (whom she had despised as Mr. Sydney) for her son-in-law.

CHAP. XI.

MRS. MOURTRAY and Emma arrived at Bath the beginning of November, where they found Colonel, Mrs. and Miss Thornley, settled in a tolerable good house, in the new buildings, near Laura Place, and extremely glad of the arrival of such an addition to their party.

The travellers were scarcely recovered from their journey, before Miss Thornley produced a list of what ought to be done, in the way of amusement, for a fortnight to come.

Mrs. Mourtray listened to this with avidity, and smiled acquiescence; but Emma was in too anxious a state of mind not to shrink, in secret, from entering this career of frivolous pleasure; yet, as she could assign no motive for her re-

pugnance, she was forced to prepare for it.

The day after her journey, as she entered the parlour, she heard Colonel Thornley, who, with all his good humour, was a complete male gossip, say, "And so, as I was telling you, Ma'am, he met an express on the road, sent by Lady Fredville, to inform him how ill she was; and so he hurried on at such a rate, to town, that he killed a horse by over fatigue."

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Mourtray; "and are you sure this is true?"

"I know it to be a fact," replied he, with a look of self-importance.

Emma listened to this discourse in the utmost astonishment; but suspended her belief, though she could not suppress some degree of inquietude.

Presently

Presently after the Colonel, who had taken up the newspaper, all at once exclaimed, "Oh, oh!—here is a rare piece of news!"

"What, what?" eagerly asked Mrs. Mourtray.

"Oh! it is nothing of much consequence to the public," replied he, "though very interesting to some folks, I'll warrant.—'Tis nothing more, than that Lord Viscount Fredville lies dangerously ill, at his house in Park Lane."

"Pshaw! who cares for that!" said Mrs. Mourtray.

Emma now felt an oppression at her heart: a vague idea obtruded itself upon her, that, if he were to die, this event might create an alteration in Lord Miramont's intentions. Less qualified than ever to share in amusement, it was with

infinite reluctance that she suffered herself to be dragged that evening to the rooms, and the night following to the play; nor was she, in the least, gratified by the admiration she excited, her thoughts being otherwise engaged.

Ten days had now passed since she left Wilmington, and yet she had received no tidings of the Marquis; but, though her impatience increased, she was sensible she had no right to be disappointed, as he had said he would not write.

One morning, while the family were sitting at breakfast, the Colonel mentioned that Lord Fredville was dead:—"This paper says," continued he, "that he died after a very short illness; and here, a little lower, is a fling at Lord Miramont, which I will read to you:—*A certain young Marquis, who has, of late, been more than ever assiduous in paying his homage to a certain Viscountess, is observed to*
drive

drive his curricie with renovated spirits, within these few days. Ay, ay !" added the Colonel; " he will not find it very difficult, to console the fair widow."

Emma, who was holding a toast to the fire for her mother, now let it fall into the cinders. Mrs. Mourtray exclaimed at her awkwardness, without having the least suspicion of the cause that produced it; whilst the former, under pretence that she was heated by standing close to the fire, flew to the window for air.

But the Colonel, who piqued himself on his penetration, followed her:—" Surely," whispered he, " this paragraph interests you, Miss Mourtray; for you look as pale as death?"

" Me! Sir!" cried Emma, forcing herself to speak; " how should it interest me?"

“Nay, that’s more than I can tell; but I beg pardon: I have no right, I know, to enquire into young Ladies secrets.”

Emma, however, soon recovered her composure; for she reflected, after the first shock, how absurd it was to be vexed either by a newspaper squib, or by the Colonel’s surmises, who had no acquaintance with Lord Miramont.

The Colonel now, in the course of the following days, frequently mentioned Lord Miramont and Lady Fredville, merely to watch, the effect the sound of their names had upon Emma, who never could, on these occasions, avoid blushing, or turning pale.

Confirmed, therefore, in his suspicions, he imparted them to Mrs. Mourtray, who assured him he was quite mistaken; but as he pertinaciously supported his
opinion,

opinion, she said, half angry, " Indeed, my good Colonel, you have very strange fancies sometimes, I must say; and this is one of them."

" My dearest Madam," said the Colonel, " why will you say this? By Heaven!—to hear you talk, any body would imagine I was a driveler; but I know well enough what I say, I promise you; and I have fifty times remarked, that your daughter never hears Lord Miramont's name without change of colour."

" Good Lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Mourtray, not at all pleased that another should plume himself on the discovery of a secret, thereby implying a want of penetration in herself:—" Good Lord! you do not, surely, pretend to be better acquainted with my own daughter than I am myself?—and I tell you, positively, she does not care a straw for the Marquis of Miramont."

“She will not venture, I believe, to say so,” answered the Colonel, whose choler was roused by contradiction.

“She never deceived me in her life,” cried Mrs. Mourtray, warmly, “and never will deceive me.”

“Oh! mighty fine!—as if young girls always confessed their follies!” cried he: “however, it is no business of mine, though I am not so easily duped as some folks;” and he bounced out of the room.

“Mrs. Mourtray, much ruffled, repaired to her daughter’s chamber:—“That absurd man, below,” cried she, “pretends, and, in defiance of all I can say, persists in asserting, that you are violently in love with Lord Miramont.—He made me quite angry, being very certain, my dear Emma, that, if you had the

the least partiality for him, you would have told me so directly."

Emma, excessively distressed by this mark of her mother's confidence in her sincerity; yet, bound by her promise to Lord Miramont, to make no communications of any kind, could only reply—"I wish to deserve your good opinion, my dear Mamma; and you may be certain, whenever I have any thing material to communicate, you will be the first person to whom I shall mention it. You know, it is generally supposed, that Lord Miramont means to marry Lady Fredville."

"Well, that does not prove," said Mrs. Mourtray, struck with the altered countenance and tremulous voice of her daughter—"well, that does not prove, that you may not have been captivated with him?—You were a long while together in the same house, and, for what I know, he may have been flirting with
you

you all that time.—Pray tell me, was it so?"

To this home question, Emma, more and more embarrassed, could only give an evasive answer. She therefore reminded her mother, that Lady Elizabeth Fontelieu being at Wilmington when she was there, of course, the three young men's attentions had been divided between them both.

Mrs. Mourtray seemed tolerably satisfied with this explanation, and dropped the subject.

But the Colonel, from a propensity which he called love of fun, frequently renewed his raillery on the score of Lord Miramont; though his good-natured sister, who saw how much it pained Emma, did all she could to stop him. Mrs. Thornley, too, in her drawling way, sometimes

said

said—"La! Colonel, how can you keep harping on this silly joke."

He was not, however, to be discouraged; and Mrs. Mourtray always thought herself obliged to repel his insinuations: hence, whenever they were alone, an argument arose between them; and, though she resolved to controvert his opinion, right or wrong, generally, before they separated, he infused some degree of doubt and distrust into her mind.

Mrs. Mourtray, therefore, if ever Emma declined going out, would cast an inquisitive eye upon her, and observe, how very odd it was, that she should love to mope at home: so that Emma, to avoid being teased, was constrained to fly about wherever her gay companions chose to go, though never less disposed to be amused with any thing.

Her

Her troubles, too, were increased at this time, by the assiduities of a Mr. Irvine, a man of fashion and large fortune, who persecuted her with his addresses, notwithstanding she peremptorily, though civilly, declined receiving them.

The month of November was now drawing to a conclusion, and yet she had heard nothing of Lord Miramont! All her reliance on his love and honour could not quiet her apprehensions that, forgetting her, he had again renewed his attachment to Lady Fredville.

Late one evening, as she was sitting alone in the parlour, pensive and sad, expecting the return of the family (who had excused her going with them to a card party), a letter was brought to her, which she only by the seal knew to come from Lord Miramont, for the address was almost illegibly written. This circumstance terrified her so much, that she had
hardly

hardly courage to open it: panting for breath, at length she broke the seal, and, with trembling hands she unfolded the paper, but her agitation increased whilst she read the following lines.

— *Hotel, Nov. 29, 17—*

“ My beloved Emma,
 “ I am just arrived here in such a state of wretchedness and distraction, that I scarcely know what I am doing—that . . . but why rave at others, when it is my own cursed folly which has undone me? All this time, this endless time since we parted, have I been hoping and expecting that each returning day would end my misery; and that I might be able, before the close of it, to fly to you, my Emma, sole object of my love, dearer to me than life itself! Instead of which, so far from having advanced in my business, I am now sunk deeper than ever in despair.

“ My

" My brain seems on fire—I am certainly very ill: I was so before I left town, but I determined to see you. I saw by the newspapers that you were here: yet, now, I am unable even to call upon you, though I have a thousand things to say.—All my thoughts, all my hopes, are clouded.—Do not, however, I conjure you, cease to love and to pity me, for I swear by Heaven I will yet be your's, or die. I have such a raging head-ache, that I can only add, that I am,

" Your most faithful and devoted

" MIRAMONT."

The contents of this letter overwhelmed Emma with grief and anxiety, though it entirely dissipated her doubts of Lord Miramont's fidelity.

There was an air of truth in every line of this tender epistle, that could not possibly be mistaken; and her solicitude, now, for his health, made her dwell little upon her

her disappointment, on learning, that the fatal mysterious barrier to all her hopes, had resisted his endeavours to overthrow it.

Sensible, that it would be utterly impossible for her to calm her flurried spirits, before the return of her friends, she bade the servant say, that she had a pain in her face, and was gone to bed; whither, in fact she went, though not to sleep, for she passed the whole night absorbed in misery.

However, not to alarm her mother, she arose, and appeared at the usual hour in the parlour the following morning: but, before she had even shut the door, the Colonel, clapping his hands, exclaimed, —“Great news! great news, Miss Mourtray! Lord Miramont arrived here yesterday evening; but whether for your sake or Lady Fredville’s, admits of doubt: for they say she is coming after him as fast

as possible, and a house is already taken for her."

Emma, who was at that moment perfectly easy about Lady Fredville, forced a smile upon her countenance, whilst she said, "Dear Sir! can it be doubtful to you, who are so well informed on all subjects, what brings Lord Miramont hither?"

"Faith, I can't pretend to decide for others;" said the Colonel, "but, in my opinion, a young woman is far better than an old one."

One of Emma's greatest vexations at present was, that she had no means of informing herself of the state of Lord Miramont's health.—Three long tedious days had now passed since the receipt of his letter, but, situated as she was, to enquire after him was impracticable, and she

she really felt so disordered herself, that she could not go into the world where she might have gathered casual intelligence; and all this while she was obliged to conceal her anxiety, and to wait with patience till he himself should send to her.

On the third evening, as she was making tea in the drawing-room, Doctor G— came to make a friendly visit to Mrs. Thornley, who had a decided partiality for all the medical tribe. Having been slightly indisposed for some days, she had, in the morning, hinted a wish to see him. When he arrived, she gently reproached him for having deserted her.

He pleaded, in his excuse, the multitude of patients he had to attend; adding, "It was really impossible for me, Madam, to call upon you this morning, for I was engaged in a consultation for a young nobleman, who is very seriously ill."

Emma

Emma suspended filling the cups—a cold shiver came over her—her mouth half opened, as if she wished to speak, but the words died on her tongue.

Too soon, however, she learned who this nobleman was, for the Colonel, as curious as herself, though not prompted by the same interest, eagerly enquired.

“A very fine young man, indeed!” replied the Doctor, “and no small favourite with the ladies. If he should die, there is a fair widow here, who, I really believe, will lose her senses. I am just come from her.”

“Well, well; but you have not told us his name,” cried the Colonel.

“It is Lord Miramont.”

Emma, who had presaged whom he was going to name, no sooner found her
fears

fears realized, than she sunk back in her chair.—A mist spread itself before her eyes, and her heart sickened so much, that she would have fallen, if Miss Thornley, who saw her situation, had not run to her assistance; and holding some aromatic vinegar to her nose, prevented her from fainting. “The heat of the room has overcome Miss Mourtray,” said she: and Emma, being a little recovered, was able, with Miss Thornley’s help, to leave the room.

Mrs. Mourtray followed her; and though Colonel Thornley was too good-natured, not to be concerned for Emma’s sufferings, he could not forbear giving her mother a significant wink, as much as to say, “I hope, now, you are convinced what I told you is true.”

Emma, having taken some drops, assured her mother, and her kind assistant, that she now felt quite well; and, in a few minutes,

minutes, accompanied them back to the drawing-room.

She found the Doctor engaged in answering questions put to him by the Colonel, respecting Lord Miramont's illness; and, though every word he spoke was a dagger to her heart, yet being desirous to learn every particular, as no torment, in her opinion, equalled suspense, she tried to fortify her mind to hear the worst, without betraying the interest she felt.

Doctor G——, who either had not noticed her sudden indisposition, or, if he had, never dreamed that he had innocently been the cause of it, went on, addressing the Colonel—"Why, as I before said, it is difficult to decide; for when I saw him first, which was the night he arrived, I found him in a high fever: but, in my opinion, his disorder, now, is chiefly

chiefly on his spirits—some mental disturbance.”

Emma sighed, but spoke not. Miss Thornley, who seemed to penetrate her thoughts, and to relieve her apprehensions, if possible, said, “I hope, Sir, Lord Miramont, though ill, is not, at least, in danger.”

“His situation, certainly, Madam, is alarming; but, as he is young and naturally strong, I hope, without being too sanguine, that he may recover, provided this uneasiness on his mind is removed.” And as he finished these words, he bowed, and retired with Mrs. Thornley, who wished, to consult him on some imaginary complaints which worried her.

Emma’s sudden indisposition, had very much staggered Mrs. Mourtray’s belief in her indifference; indeed, almost con-

vinced her of the contrary; but seeing that she still looked extremely pale, she made no comments on what had passed; only, with an unusual coldness in her manner, she, at an early hour, recommended to her to go to bed, which counsel her daughter readily followed.

CHAP. XII.

EXHAUSTED by having passed many sleepless nights, Emma, notwithstanding the additional load of sorrow that oppressed her, for a short time forgot the cruel intelligence she had heard, but awakened to feel it the more acutely.

Early in the morning Mrs. Mourtray came into her chamber, to enquire after her health, but without much shew of cordiality—chagrin and ill humour were marked on her countenance: “I am come,” said she, “to enquire whether you choose to retain this unaccountable reserve with your mother, or to act ingenuously with me, as I have a right to expect from you?”

She paused, whilst Emma, who trembled as she heard this preface, was too confused to answer. "Tell me, then," continued her mother, "what I am to think of your fainting away last night? For as to the heat of the room, *that* was only a feigned excuse—What was it, therefore, that affected you?"

"I have not been well for some days Mamma," replied Emma with a faltering voice; "and last night I felt, all at once, extremely sick and ill."

"I have heard your father often say, there is no effect without a cause; what, then, do you suppose occasioned this sudden indisposition?"

"My dear Mamma," cried Emma, bursting into tears, "for Heaven's sake spare me—urge me not—I cannot, no, it is impossible—I cannot answer your questions."

"Mighty

“Mighty well!—admirable!” said Mrs. Mourtray, angrily: “however, let me advise you not to make yourself ridiculous: dry your tears, and come along with me to the Pump-room.—A little air, and change of scene, will do you good.—No excuses; I will be obeyed.”

As Emma could not soften her displeasure by any explanation, she was forced to submit to her will.

Those persons, only, who have been in the unhappy predicament, of being dragged into public with a corroding anxiety in their heart, which some secret reason forces them to conceal, can form any conception of what Emma felt at this compulsion.

The only consolation she had, was the hope of hearing some tidings of Lord Miramont, from the voice of rumour; and Miss Thornley, who accompanied

them, made it her business to enquire after this interesting object. Presently, she said, with a benevolent smile, addressing Mrs. Mourtray, but loud enough for Emma to hear her, "Though I am not acquainted with Lord Miramont, I am, delighted to hear he is rather better this morning."

"Umph!" was the only answer she received from Mrs. Mourtray; but Emma could not refrain from giving her a grateful look.

A whole week had now passed, during which time Emma would have sunk into a state of despair, had it not been for Miss Thornley, who seemed to have entered into a tacit convention with her, constantly to communicate any good news she heard of Lord Miramont, and as carefully to conceal the bad: never mingling with her intelligence any remarks,

marks, surmises, or allusions, that might distress her.

At the end of this period, he became so much worse than ever he had been, that his physicians nearly gave him over; and Miss Thornley's silence, and melancholy countenance, too well prepared Emma, to expect the greatest misfortune that, in her opinion, could befall her.

Unable any longer to struggle with her feelings, she abandoned herself to sorrow: when, scarcely sensible what she was doing, she suddenly resolved to go herself to the Hotel where the Marquis lodged, and learn from his servant the exact truth as to his situation. Without saying a word to any body, she put on her cloak, and rushed into the street. At that instant she saw Muller, Lord Miramont's servant, whom she had often seen at Wilmington, advancing fast towards her. She stopped; her trembling legs could scarcely

M 4

support

support her, but her eyes remained fixed upon him.

She observed, however, nothing gloomy in his countenance; for, though he looked flurried, his eyes were lively and animated. He bowed respectfully as he approached, exclaiming—"Good news!—charming news, Madam!—my Lord is much better; and he ordered me to deliver this note into your own hands.—Should it require any answer, you will honour me with it as soon as possible, for I must hasten back to his Lordship."

Emma eagerly seized the note, but being unable to articulate, she beckoned to Muller to follow her, and then, leaving him in the passage, she flew to her chamber, where she tore open the note, which only contained these lines.

"I SHALL live, my dear Miss Mourtray. I am wonderfully relieved since last night.
—My

—My physicians, however, will not let me write. Shew this to Mrs. Mourtray, and tell her, that my first visit shall be to the mother of *her* whom I adore, and whom, as the most inestimable treasure in this world, I hope she will bestow on,

“ Your faithful, &c.

“ MIRAMONT.”

A torrent of tears bedewed this paper, as Emma read it: and immediately afterwards she poured forth humble and truly pious effusions of gratitude, to the Almighty, for sparing the life of her lover.

Then taking a pen, she wrote thus:

“ NO language can express my late sorrow, or my present joy! Take care of your health, dearest Lord Miramont, and remember, that Emma lives for you alone. The commission you have given me to my mother, I will perform as soon as she comes home: she will, I am sure, participate

cipate in the pleasure I feel at the amendment of your health. I will not detain your servant, therefore shall only add, that I am ever

“ Your faithful
“ EMMA MOURTRAY.”

Mrs. Mourtray's absence afforded her daughter time to compose her spirits, in some measure. With delight unutterable, she repeated—“ He will live!—yes, thank Heaven, he will; and he will live for me! —All difficulties now are over: for it is clear this obstacle, whatever it was, is removed; else he would not have bidden me shew his note to my mother: and, though I understand what he means by saying, he is *wonderfully relieved*, this expression cannot strike her as particular, and she will naturally attribute this relief to medical aid. How happy I am to be released from the painful necessity of concealing my feelings; and the bliss that awaits me, from my mother!—Oh! if my
dear

dear father were but here to share in my joy, surely he would no longer object to Lord Miramont, who has forsaken Lady Fredville for my sake. He has been at death's door, too, on my account.—That woman certainly held his destiny in her hands. Ah! why did he ever put himself thus in her power?—But I will not think of that: his future conduct, I trust, will be exemplary; we shall be the happiest of beings, and we will make others so: every creature near us shall be taken care of.—Poor Henry, if ever he be found, will never more want a friend; and dear Lord Miramont will reconcile him to the Silbournes. My French friends, oh! how delightful to make them forget, that they are banished from their own country!”

Soft tears stole gently down her cheeks, while she solaced herself with these and a thousand other benevolent plans, which she should now have so amply the means

of executing, till Mrs. Mourtray's return turned her thoughts into another channel.

"Bless me, child!" exclaimed she, as soon as she saw her—"what is the matter with you?—your cheeks are as red as fire."

"My dear, dear Mamma," cried Emma, throwing herself upon her neck, "I longed so to see you!—I have something to shew you."

"Well!—what—what does all this mean?"

Emma presented her with the note; but it had not at all the effect she expected.

"So! the grand secret is revealed," said Mrs. Mourtray, drily:—"at last I am to be told of this affair, which, I suppose

suppose, has long been known to every body else!"

"Never, my dear mother, upon my word, has it, to my knowledge, been mentioned to a creature."

She then confessed, that Lord Miramont had acknowledged his partiality for her, at Wilmington; but that, for some reasons, which he had not explained to her, he wished his sentiments to remain a secret for a little while; and now, as soon as a favourable turn had taken place in his late severe illness, he had hastened to communicate his wishes to them both.

Mrs. Mourtray was not thoroughly satisfied with this explanation:—"I perceive," said she, "that I am more obliged to Lord Miramont than to you: his first thought is to have me informed of his proposal; but you, my own child, have

have kept a secret buried in your bosom for weeks, and suffered me to hold a thousand ridiculous disputes with Colonel Thornley, when, all the while, you knew that I was deceived!—No, Emma, indeed, I did not think you could have served me so!”

Mrs. Mourtray finished these words with an emotion, that smote her daughter to the heart; and, in the humblest manner, she besought her pardon, protesting how sincerely she loved and respected her.

Softened by her distress, Mrs. Mourtray took her hand; and Emma, pressing it to her lips, assured her, that every idea of joy and happiness faded, when she saw her offended:—“Ah! blame me not,” continued she, “for what I could not help!—Could you but know half what I have suffered, when I dared not speak,
you

you would—yes, I am sure you would—
forgive me.”

Mrs. Mourtray loved her daughter too much, to retain her displeasure any longer, and she folded her tenderly in her arms. She now, as her good humour returned, began to exult in Emma's brilliant prospect :—“ Ah !” cried she, “ I always thought that sweet face of your's would make your fortune ; but, to be sure, I never dreamed of such a match as this for you. I thought Chowles would have been an excellent one ; but what comparison can be made between him, or even Lord Clannarmon, and the Marquis of Miramont.”

“ O ! none, none !” thought Emma.

The mother and daughter, after a very long and interesting conversation to them both, agreed that nothing should transpire relative to Lord Miramont, till he had
been

been to wait upon them ; and that they would write, by the first mail, to Mr. Mourtray, without having any idea of waiting for his consent, that being unnecessary ; as Mrs. Mourtray had been informed, by him, of the paper left in Emma's possession.

The latter, just after her mother had left her, was surprized by a visit from Miss Thornley ; who, affecting to tell her the news of the day, mentioned, amongst other things, that Lord Miramont was considerably better ; “ But, I perceive,” added she, “ you do not stand in need of my chit-chat to enliven you ; for there is an uncommon brilliancy in your eyes to-day.”

Emma coloured, and felt she had so much cause, to be grateful for her good-natured attentions, that she could not bear the idea of being too reserved with her ; therefore she acknowledged that

Lord

Lord Miramont's amendment gave her no small degree of satisfaction.

Mrs. Mourtray now sent daily to enquire after him ; and as the accounts were every day more and more favourable, her secret became so burthensome to her, that it soon ceased to be any, so frequently did she relieve herself by hints, which every body understood ; and the Colonel now triumphed in his sagacity.

As soon as the Marquis was suffered to go out, he hastened to make his promised visit, and it is needless to recount the reception he received. Both he and Emma were too much agitated, at first, to hold any connected discourse ; but when Mrs. Mourtray, for a short time, left them alone, he slightly touched on the agonies he endured, when he despaired of ever calling her his own : these, he said, had occasioned his illness ; which, he was persuaded,

persuaded, would have been fatal, if the cruel barrier between them had not suddenly, when he least expected it, given way. Still he declined entering into any explanations, though he solemnly protested that he was free; and Emma, relying on this assurance, accepted, unreservedly, his vows of eternal love and fidelity.

It was not till long after this period that Emma learned what the obstacle had been, which occasioned to them both so much misery.

This circumstance shall now be explained:—

During the first effervescence of Lord Miramont's culpable passion for Lady Fredville, some time before he had seen Emma, the former, one day, expressed great doubts and apprehensions of the possibility of a man, so many years younger than herself, remaining long faithfully attached

attached to her. All he could say and protest seemed to make little impression on her mind: "I firmly believe," said she, "that you sincerely feel, at present, *all* that you say; but your friends and family will persuade you to marry: some new beauty will conquer your prejudices against marriage; and I, who adore you, and who never can love any creature in the world but yourself, shall lose you for ever!"

"What can I do to tranquillize you?" cried the Marquis.

Lady Fredville pretended to be absorbed in thought:—at length, starting, she exclaimed, "Yes, this will do; give me a solemn oath that you never will marry without my consent, and I shall feel perfectly easy and satisfied."

"Oh! that I will do, willingly," replied Lord Miramont, smiling; "and I will
do

do more ; for I will give you, in writing, a promise to this effect, which you shall draw up yourself, and I will sign it ;—though all these precautions are very unnecessary ; for, independant of my sentiments for you, I have an aversion even to the thoughts of marrying.”

The oath was taken, and the promise signed, sealed, and delivered to Lady Fredville.

In the course of a few months, Lord Miramont saw Emma—admired, and gradually became partial to her ; grew tired of Lady Fredville, and repented of his promise.

They had repeated quarrels and reconciliations.—One day he vowed never to see her more, and the next he was at her feet : such was her art, and his weakness !—At length, without saying a word to her of his intention, he suddenly left town

town with Lord Fontelieu. This she resented highly, but kept her indignation to herself.

After his declaration to Emma, when he left Wilmington in such haste, he resolved to go to Lady Fredville, and candidly tell her, that reflection had convinced him, that, for many reasons, besides being the last of his family, he ought to marry, and entreat her to cancel his promise.

He knew that this would be the most likely method of prevailing upon her to relinquish it; for that she would be furious, if she heard of any attachment that he had formed. Once released from his obligation, he intended to break this matter to her.

On his arrival, though she received him very coldly, he was not discouraged; but made his request calmly; stating his
reasons

reasons for marrying ; and representing, that, as the paper in her hands could be of no use to her, he trusted to her generosity for restoring that, and releasing him from his oath.

She heard him with indignation ; a violent scene ensued, and they separated in disgust. Nevertheless, he called upon her the day following, when, by degrees, she became more placable ; for she had reflected, that, by disobliging, she should lose him entirely ; whereas, in the contrary case, she might have a chance of retaining his friendship ; and, perhaps, hereafter (inconstant as he was) of supplanting his wife.

She, therefore, amused him with hopes ; artfully, however, trying to discover who the person was, that had suddenly inspired him with these matrimonial projects ; but she found him impenetrable.

In the interval between this visit and his next, Lord Fredville was taken extremely ill: this did not prevent his wife from seeing Lord Miramont; when, to his great disappointment, he found her disposition totally changed, and she coldly refused entering upon the subject in question.

Her husband's illness, which increased rapidly, had given quite another turn to her thoughts: should he die, she might marry the Marquis herself; therefore, to his importunities (as soon as Lord Fredville was given over) she returned the most absolute and peremptory refusal; and as exterior decency gave her a pretext for declining to see him, he had no longer any opportunities of trying, to soften her obduracy.

He annoyed her, however, with letters, to which she sent no answer.

At

At length, after Lord Fredville was dead and buried, and her doors open again, with all due decorum, to her intimate friends, he forced himself into her presence. She affected a tender melancholy, suitable to her situation; and even so far commanded herself as to listen, with apparent calmness, to the renewal of the prohibited subject: after which she told him, with a soft smile, that circumstances having altered very much since the opening of this business, he must excuse her enabling him to give that hand to another, which she hoped he would, in proper time, offer to that person, whose tenderness gave her the best claim to it; and to whose reputation, injured by him, he owed all the reparation in his power.

Lord Miramont listened, with a sarcastic smile:—"What was lost by *that person*, Madam?" said he:—"when I was yet a child, it is as impossible I can ever re-
store,

store, as that I should make myself so ridiculous as to accept the honour designed me. Had her conduct been different, I might have remembered my attachment without regret:—now, I only think of it with detestation.”

He then quitted her instantly; but, when the anger that her assurance had provoked subsided, he repented having thus exasperated, instead of soothing her; and again he had recóurse to prayers and entreaties, which she rejected with scorn and defiance.

Desperate, then, he flung himself into his chaise, and hurried down to Bath, where he thought the sight of his beloved Emma would afford some mitigation to his sorrows.—His illness denied him this relief.

Never having, in his life, experienced the slightest contradiction, his heart now

swelled with every turbulent passion.— Rage, love, hatred, and disappointment, set his blood into the most violent fermentation: severe medical discipline cooled this; but despair had taken such possession of his mind, that he seemed sinking under it.

In the mean while Lady Fredville, who had followed him to Bath, was little less agitated herself; for, the same Physician attending both, she heard of him constantly. One moment, pitying his deplorable condition, she almost determined no longer to be inexorable: the next, she endeavoured to persuade herself, that his illness was accidental, and that she was not answerable for it. Yet Doctor G—— persisting in his assertion, that the seat of it was in his mind, again made her waver; for she well knew, that she alone could restore him to tranquillity; but, then, as she must renounce those agreeable projects, which she still flattered herself

herself might yet succeed, she hesitated ; till his imminent danger wrought so upon her fears, that they decided her resolution.

She sent, therefore, in great haste, for Doctor G — ; and, giving him a sealed paper, she requested he would carry it instantly to the Marquis ; adding, that it would do him more good than all his prescriptions.

The Doctor found his patient extremely ill, but perfectly sensible : he refused to take Lady Fredville's letter, till he heard the speech which accompanied the delivery of it : then he eagerly opened it, and found the paper containing his fatal promise torn in two.

This sight operated like magic : he slept that night, for the first time during the last week ; and how speedily afterwards he recovered has already been

mentioned. As soon as Lady Fredville heard Doctor G—— pronounce him out of danger she left Bath.

The intended marriage now was openly declared, and announced to all Lord Miramont's family.

Mrs. Mourtray could not contain her raptures; expatiating to her friend, the Colonel, (who, as well as his family, shared in her joy) on Lord Miramont's high rank, great connections, and, above all, on his fortune, which she valued far the most.

Though this her imagination, assisted by his generosity to herself, magnified exceedingly; for it was (considering his station) by no means large.

Nevertheless he acted nobly concerning settlements; for he directed his lawyers to assign to Emma the same jointure as his father had settled on his mother.

While

While the preparations were making for the approaching event, and that Mrs. Mourtray was living in a perpetual bustle, Lord Miramont passed the chief part of each day, delightfully, with Emma. As Lady Fredville was now gone, and that his health was quickly restored, every circumstance conspired to render her completely happy: her mind being now relieved from constraint, sorrow, and anxiety, the vivid bloom of youth again glowed in her cheeks, and she re-assumed her natural gaiety.

She had written to Lady Wilmington, to whom she thought she owed this mark of respect, to announce the honour she hoped to have, of shortly belonging to her family.

The answer she received to her letter was not absolutely ungracious, though cold; for Lady Wilmington, well as she liked Emma as a companion, was not

pleased that she should become her niece, deeming none but persons of the highest rank worthy of that honour: however, as she could not prevent this, she resolved, on account of her nephew, to keep with her on terms of civility.

Lady Elizabeth felt too much mortification at Emma's good fortune to write to her on this occasion; and she was, at that time, in particular ill humour, as Sir Harry continued to procrastinate.

As it was settled that the nuptial ceremony should be performed at Bath, by Lord Miramont's chaplain, it took place accordingly, about the middle of January. Colonel Thornley, to his great delight, had the honour of acting as father to the bride on this occasion.

Immediately afterwards, the new-married couple set out for Highwood (Lord Miramont's seat, in Sussex), whence they purposed,

purposed, after a month's stay, to repair to London, where Mrs. Mourtray, who could, in the mean while, afford to remain at Bath, promised to join them, and become their guest for three or four months.

Lord Miramont, amongst other presents, had given her three very fine coach horses, which contributed not a little to put him in her good graces.

Happy as were all parties, the mother and daughter did not separate without shedding tears, and the former continued, for some time, in a wild hurry of spirits; but, when these calmed, she looked forward to the pleasure of shortly seeing the Marchioness of Miramont; and trusted that her fate, would resemble that of those imaginary heroines, whose history usually terminates with words to this effect, *and they were married, and lived happy.*

Lord

Lord and Lady Miramont had not proceeded far on their journey, when the postillions, having taken a cheering cup too much, in honour of their Lord's nuptials, were inspired with such extraordinary spirits, that, in whirling round a sharp angle, they overset the carriage, and the axle-tree broke.

Neither Lord Miramont nor Emma was much hurt, but one of the horses beginning to kick at a furious rate, their situation, really became very dangerous; especially as one of the drivers had been jerked off his horse, and the other seemed stupified with fright and liquor.

At that instant a post-chaise came near the spot, and a gentleman immediately leaped out of it, followed by his servant, to assist in containing the fury of the restive animal. The carriage was now disengaged from the horses, and Lord Miramont,

mont, having scrambled out of it, assisted Lord Clannarmon (for it was him) to lift Emma thence.

The terror she had suffered had nearly deprived her of sense; but no sooner did she find herself safe, than, raising her eyes to see to whom she was obliged, she beheld Lord Clannarmon! Pale as Death he looked; seeming almost to want, himself, the support he was affording her.

She immediately felt what his sensations must be at that moment. The circumstances in which he found her, and the favours on the servants hats, must have informed him of her marriage; and she sincerely regretted the unlucky chance which had thrown him in her way.

She attempted, however, to make her acknowledgments for the kind assistance he had given, but, affected by the deep
dejection

dejection in his air, her voice faltered as she spoke.

Lord Miramont who had no idea of what was passing in Lord Clannarmon's mind, frankly thanked him for his attentions, and gave him a very cordial invitation to Highwood.

Lord Clannarmon bowed; made an effort to say something civil; but he spoke unintelligibly. As no person ever cared less about forms and ceremonies than the Marquis, he did not observe that the other had made him no congratulations, nor, that there was any thing extraordinary in his behaviour; but he saw that he was much altered, and concluded, he was unwell.

It was now settled, that Lord and Lady Miramont should proceed on their journey in Lord Clannarmon's carriage; the latter

latter insisting upon their taking it: therefore, after conducting Emma, with a trembling hand, and placing her in his chaise, he bowed to Lord Miramont, and, mounting one of the servant's horses, he rode on to the next stage, while they pursued their route; leaving the disabled chaise to the care of their servants.

Emma, who had too clearly seen the perturbation of Lord Clannarmon's mind, was so disturbed by it, that it was some time before she could recover her tranquillity.

The report of her intended marriage had, almost as soon as the event was settled, reached Lord Clannarmon's ears; but he was ignorant when it would take place.

Little did he think, on his return from Brighthelmstone, whither he had been, to
try,

try, by change of scene, to dissipate the anguish of his soul, that he should be so unfortunate, as to meet the happy Marquis carrying home his lovely bride.

This shock totally bereft him of all fortitude; and when he reached his house at Wheatley, had not Fitzaubert exerted himself to soothe and console him, he would have sunk a martyr to love and despair.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.